



BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018

Greetings from all of us on the Board of Selectmen. Here's what's happening in your town government ...

FIRST SELECTMAN'S MESSAGE

Six months have passed since our last newsletter and it seems time is moving ever faster. The town held its annual meeting in May, where it passed a budget, accepted a gift of a cemetery and joined the Ledge Light Health District. So far, all seem to be progressing smoothly.

The fiscal year ended positively (see the next article) and projects for the new fiscal year are beginning. Road improvements will begin soon on Elys Ferry Road, Cove Road, Grassy Hill Road and Birch Mill Road. The resurfacing of Old Hamburg Road and the portion of Joshuatown Road around the bridge will also begin soon. The latter improvement will complement the bridge repairs from last fiscal year.

The selectmen are nearing the completion of a new website design to better communicate with residents and we look forward to hearing your feedback on it. We will also be scheduling a small number of "open house" nights where residents can share concerns, ask questions or just discuss the current state of Lyme with the Board of Selectmen. We hope you will take advantage of these opportunities to share your thoughts with your government.

The town is getting ever closer to completing the purchase of the 250-acre Johnston property. The state has approved a \$850,000 grant towards our purchase and has almost completed the lengthy review required to release those funds to us. We look forward to putting this process behind us and adding this acreage to our development of a greenway across town.

The town has also completed a significant legal case that has been ongoing for many years. The case defining the ownership of the end of Brockways Ferry Road has been settled by the Connecticut Supreme Court with a unanimous finding in favor of the town. The length and width of the town road is now decided and the town's rights will again extend to the river.

From all of us on the Board of Selectmen, thank you for reading. —*Steven Mattson*

FINANCIAL CONDITION OF OUR TOWN.

Our town's finances are in very good shape right now – which is a credit to our previous and current Boards of Finance and Selectmen who have developed conservative spending plans; presented them to Lyme residents; and secured residents' support and passage of these plans.

As a result of this financial oversight, Lyme continues to be one of the towns with the lowest property taxes in our state. Our Mill rate stands at a low 18.6 Mills and increases in our property taxes have continued to average less than 2% a year. Our Boards of Finance and Selectmen will continue to strive to keep our taxes low, while still meeting the needs of our town, maintaining our 40 miles of roads and taking care of our more than 2,300 residents.

We determine the town's financial health by examining the level of the town's General Fund (checking account), Specific Funds (savings accounts) and level of debt outstanding:

- The town's General Fund is designed to protect us from unanticipated major expenses we might encounter – such as major damage to our town's infrastructure – and provide for cash flow needs. This fund currently stands right where we want it to be, holding the equivalent of two months of operating expenses.
- The town's Specific Funds are designed to protect us from needing large tax increases that could otherwise result from large-scale capital projects, such as the purchase of an important land parcel that becomes available, or a major building renovation or vehicle purchase. The largest of these funds are called the Capital Non-Recurring Fund and the Open Space Reserve Fund. Combined they currently stand at 50% of where we want them to be, which is satisfactory as we are continuing to add to these funds each year.
- The town's debt level decreased slightly this year and we remain solidly on

track to retire all of our debt by 2023 (not including the portion of the Regional School District's debt that is Lyme's responsibility).

We recently ended our fiscal year at the end of June with a budget surplus of \$203,000, primarily due to three factors:

- The full collection of property taxes due by our Tax Collector.
- Increased building permit fees and real estate conveyance fees resulting from a stronger real estate market.
- Expenses coming in lower than the amount budgeted, thanks to strong control of spending by all departments in town.

Your town government will continue to keep our tax rate low through financial management targeting the long term; and purchasing for value, not solely for the cheapest option available. We will remain one of the lowest property tax towns in Connecticut.

QUARTERLY QUESTION

Q: Can residents donate land to be used as open space?

A: Yes. If you own land that you would like to see forever protected from development, you can donate that land either to the town or to the Lyme Land Conservation Trust for permanent designation as open space. There are various ways to structure a land donation, some of which offer significant tax benefits, so you should consult with an attorney or financial advisor about your specific options. To discuss a donation to the Land Trust, please contact its executive director, Kristina White at kristina.white@lymelandtrust.org. To discuss a donation to the town, please contact First Selectman Steven Mattson at selectman@townlyme.org.

To submit a question for possible inclusion in a future newsletter, please send your question, along with your name and contact information, to: AsktheLymeBoS@gmail.com.



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RETURN ADDRESS:

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Board of Selectmen:

Steven Mattson, *First Selectman*
Parker Lord, *Second Selectman*
John Kiker, *Third Selectman*

OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES. Approximately every 10 years, Lyme conducts a survey of its residents – the results of which are used to update the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD) to ensure the wishes of residents become the goals of our boards and commissions. The most recent survey results (from 2014) found virtually unanimous support for permanent protection of our natural resources and community character through the creation of permanent open space. The updated PoCD identified the following as some of the town priorities:

- Preserve large, connected tracts of undeveloped and open land to maintain the town's rural character, protect public health and safety, and retain wildlife habitat.
- Continue to support the development of a town-wide greenway plan and seek preservation over time of parcels which are located within the proposed greenways.
- Continue town funding for a reserve account for

purchase of open space land. Such "opportunity" funds can allow for optioning land, paying for surveys and appraisals; and can enable the town to act quickly when a desirable property becomes available.

The acquisition of large open space tracts also represents a tool for maintaining low property taxes. Two-thirds of every property-tax dollar goes toward the education of our children. Since the school costs for each additional new child far exceed the property tax received from each new house added in town, the preservation of open space avoids the building of new subdivisions and any associated increase in school costs.

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