

SELECTMEN'S NEWSLETTER WINTER 2012

Sufficient time has elapsed and there are enough new developments of interest around town to warrant publication of another edition of the Selectmen's Newsletter.

First, the Town Campus Center Planning Committee continues its dedicated effort to develop plans and cost projections for the proposed renovation and expansion of the Town Hall as well as construction of a new Public Library. At some point this coming spring, there will be a final public information session for any and all interested residents and taxpayers with a referendum to consider project authorization to follow shortly thereafter.

The preliminary estimated project cost is 4.7 million dollars. Work is already underway to secure government grants as well as corporate and foundation funding to offset a portion of the cost. In addition, the Board of Selectmen is committed to securing a minimum of one million dollars in private funding before the project will be permitted to proceed should it pass at referendum. A significant pledge, which could total as much as 150-thousand dollars, is already in hand to jump start the fund raising drive. We felt it appropriate to acknowledge this commitment by a local family foundation in our newsletter and offer thanks for their vital involvement.

The "new" wing of the Town Hall and the Library are now both forty years old and are fast approaching the end of their functional life spans. The old church portion of the Town Hall was built in the mid-1800's and neither building comes close to being in compliance with code requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Their capacity to meet Lyme's future needs will be expensive and problematic. The Town Hall IT room for example consists of servers sitting on chairs in the old, dirt floor section of the church, while the Library's computers are sandwiched into a corner of the reference area.

The TCCPC is designing buildings that can meet town needs for the foreseeable future without excessive "bells and whistles." The Town Hall would be approximately 49-hundred square feet with part time employees still sharing office space but having individual work areas. A new code compliant, appropriately sized vault for land and vital records is also included, with the historic church structure to be restored and returned to its former days as a meeting room.

The committee explored the possibility of renovation as an option for the Library as well but determined early on in the process that the projected cost could not produce a building capable of delivering adequate services or meeting the town's long term needs. By designing a new structure, the architect has produced a floor plan of less than 68-hundred square feet which will accommodate the Local History Archives presently housed in the basement of the Public Hall. There will also be a

separate children's room, computer section, small meeting/work rooms and a community room for Library programs and use by Lyme's clubs and organizations.

By Lyme's standards, the project is ambitious. That said however, a key Board of Selectmen responsibility is to position the town to best possible advantage in terms of meeting our future needs. We believe the proposed undertaking does exactly that with the frugal yet prudent approach which has long characterized our community.

Drawings of the two buildings are available at the Town Hall and Library. They can also be viewed or downloaded from the TCCPC blog at www.lymetowncampus.blogspot.com.

In other news, work to transition our bulky waste landfill to transfer station status will continue next fiscal year. Power will be run to the facility and pads and sheds constructed to enable relocation of our waste oil and antifreeze recycling programs from the Town Garage to the Brush Hill Road site. There is also a provision for establishing a swap shop where residents can browse and claim items which might otherwise be discarded.

This spring and summer, look for all of our street signs to be gradually replaced. This is in response to a Federal Highway Administration mandate being phased in over the next few years imposing new visibility standards. The town crew has already installed a sample set on Bill Hill Road which is representative of what will happen town wide.

Finally, anticipate a resolution at the Annual Budget Meeting this May enabling Lyme to join a new Council of Governments which will expand our existing Regional Planning Organization configuration from its present nine member communities to 17. This is being accomplished by merging the CT River Estuary Regional Planning Agency with its Mid-State counterpart. This is being done primarily as a preemptive strategy in anticipation of a state mandated consolidation of the state's Regional Planning Organizations which conceivable could place Lyme in a configuration less to our liking.

As always, reader's questions and comments are welcome. The Board of Selectmen very much appreciates residents making the effort to be informed, productive members of the community.