



# BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S NEWSLETTER

Summer 2020

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

The year 2020 has been quite interesting and challenging. Following a mild winter, we have experienced a pandemic, a tropical storm which did considerable damage in Lyme, and social upheaval surrounding inequality within our country.

Lyme continues to manage these issues and our residents have shown their continued strength as a community by coming together to help neighbors in a time of need. The community response to our call for volunteers during the early virus outbreak was overwhelming and proves once again why our Town is so special.

It appears that the virus will be with us for longer than we wish. We will continue to do everything possible to protect our residents and employees while we await the vaccine needed to move past COVID-19. We thank our residents for their mask wearing and social distancing, and their patience as we adapt to a new normal. We encourage all residents to continue to wear masks in public and avoid large gatherings.

Throughout these past few months of crisis, the Town has continued to move ahead. The highlights are summarized below ...

**Financial:** Our fiscal year that ended June 30, 2020, was another strong positive year. Income levels that exceeded the budget target and spending that was below the appropriation level combined to return more than \$500,000 to the General Fund Balance compared with budget expectations. The Board of Finance passed our Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget and a property tax increase was again avoided. This marks the third year in the last four that our taxes did not rise and we should be proud of this accomplishment. We remain one of the lowest tax rate towns in Connecticut.

Funds are being set aside to cover the two bridge-replacement projects that are underway and this planning will mitigate the tax impact from this \$4 million of spending on the Town's infrastructure. Our debt

is continuing to be retired at a rapid pace and we anticipate that Lyme will be debt free in three more years.

**Road Maintenance:** The Town continues to make the necessary repairs and improvements to our 40 miles of local roads. Chip sealing has been completed on Beaver Brook Road, Keeney Road and Baker Lane and we continue with our plan to address five miles of roads each year. Many other improvements are continuing with safety being our core focus. Open catch basins are being covered or protected, and guard rails are being repaired or installed along unsafe portions of our roads. These needs are great, and we continue to be committed to a long-term program to increase the safety and appearance of Lyme's roads.

**Tropical Storm Isaias:** Lyme experienced a powerful storm on August 4th that toppled trees, closed roads and caused 98 percent of the Town to lose power. The utility company, Eversource, reached Lyme after two days and restored power piece by piece. Some residents had power restored in two or three days, while many of us experienced a five-day outage until the majority of the Town was back on the grid. Our Town Crew removed all road blockages that did not involve power lines before Eversource arrived.

Residents should be aware that the Town is prohibited from addressing trees that are within 20 feet of power lines. Only utility crews and their contractors can address these situations. Lyme experienced downed wires all over town, and more than a dozen roads were closed for some period. Our Emergency Management Director and his staff were in constant communication with the utility company, our fire and ambulance services, and our Town Crew to assess and prioritize where help was needed most. We must anticipate that more storms, and even some with greater intensity, will occur as our weather chang-

es over time.

The Town Crew of four is still cleaning up after this storm. Roadside clearing of trees and brush will take time and they are working hard to reach all roads. This unanticipated workload will have the unfortunate consequence of delaying roadside mowing and other planned work that normally occurs this time of year.

**Town Facilities during COVID-19 Emergency:** Unfortunately, all Town facilities were forced to close on March 23rd as the virus spread into our region. Lyme experienced our first positive case on March 25th. The number of cases in Town has thankfully been few, but we have had a total of eight positive cases and, mercifully, no deaths.

Town employees, other than our hard-working Town Crew, worked from home while our facilities were closed and we put together plans for an eventual reopening. Employees returned starting on May 26th and the public was invited back inside Town Hall on June 8th and the Library on June 9th, following a modified schedule for the safety of our residents and employees.

We have carefully been reopening all facilities with an eye on the virus trends and an abundance of caution. We hope the inconvenience has been minimal. As of this printing, our facilities are operating under the following schedule:

- Town Hall – Open to the public on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9am–4pm. Available by phone or email on Tuesday and Thursday.
- Public Library – Open to the public on Tuesday from 10am–5pm, Thursday from 10am–8pm and Saturday from 10am–4pm. Wednesday and Friday curbside pickup is available by contacting the library directly.
- Brush Hill Transfer Station – Open on its full normal schedule of Monday, Thursday and Saturday from 9am–4pm. Recycling can be delivered here all three days.

- Hamburg Recycling Center – Open on Tuesday and Wednesday from 8am–2pm; Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 9am– 4pm.
- Use of Town facilities for meetings by non-governmental groups is still restricted.

We will be constantly reviewing the virus' progression with the hope that we can again restore normal hours, but we also stand ready to curtail operations once again should conditions require. Presently we do not anticipate additional changes until year end.

**Elections:** The August 11 presidential primary experienced a slightly below normal voter turnout. Fully two-thirds

of those voting did so by absentee ballot. On November 3rd, we will be conducting the election for president and other offices. We encourage voters to again take advantage of the absentee ballot to vote and thus reduce possible virus exposure to themselves and other residents, as well as to our neighbors who have volunteered to work the polls.

Absentee-ballot applications are available now. Residents should request and return an application as early as possible. (See the instructions from the Town Clerk on the Town website.)

When the ballots are received this October, please return them as quickly as possible

to assure that your vote will be counted. A ballot box has been installed in the Town Hall parking area where ballots can be dropped off to avoid any possible postal service delays.

The Selectmen wish that all of you stay in good health. The future may be cloudy, but we know Lyme will prevail. Thank you all for your efforts and understanding.

Steven Mattson  
John Kiker  
Parker Lord

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**Board of Selectmen:**

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

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