BOARD OF FINANCE

LYME TOWN HALL
480 HAMBURG ROAD
LYME, CT 06371

LYME BOARD OF FINANCE
Virtual Budget Hearing/Regular Meeting

The Lyme Board of Finance held a virtual budget hearing/regular meeting on Tuesday April 27, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dan Hagan Chair, Judith Duran, Kathryn Wayland, Peter Evankow, Jarrod Leonardo, David Brown, and unseated alternates Susan Tyler, Bob House, and Bruce Anderson.
Selectmen Present: Steven Mattson, John Kiker, and Parker Lord
Members of the public also present

Hagan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Approval of the minutes from the April 13, 2021 meeting

Wayland stated that she would like the minutes to be revised to include more of the discussion regarding the recycling center and transfer station and Duran asked that a correction to replace her name with Leonardo's under the Seat Alternate Member section of the minutes. Hagan stated that approval of the minutes will be tabled until revisions are made.

Presentation of the Fiscal Year 21/22 Budget

Hagan gave an overview of the budget proposal. Total expenditures are budgeted at $10,969,497 and the general fund balance is projected to increase around $300,000 to a total of $2,737,864. Two positions have been added under operating expenses, a part time financial director under the treasurer line item and a building inspector that will be trained to replace the current building inspector when he retires. Regional school district student count has gone down .8% from the previous year, for a savings almost $450,000. The budget includes an increased payout of outstanding debt which will eliminate all debt the town currently owes. The town will be able to hold the mill rate at 19.95 if the proposed budget is approved at town meeting.

Hagan stated that town has received about 16 letters from residents. These letters will become public record as an addendum to the meeting minutes and all Board of Finance members have received copies of the letters. Fifteen of the letters were written to express the writers' thoughts on Open Space. Hagan thanked the citizens for the professional and courteous tone of the letters. Hagan stated that although the board is not opposed to open space, the board also knows that some residents are experiencing hard financial times, and recognized that the town may be holding an excessive amount of taxpayer's money. The town has over $4.5 million saved in various accounts. The Board of Selectman suggested $470,000 go into the open space fund for the upcoming year. This spotlighted the large amount of money going into savings, and the board discussed reducing the amount going into the open space fund. The Board of Finance

decided to cap the open space fund at $500,000, reducing it from $1,000,000. The Board of Finance believes that the money saved over various accounts can be used, if needed, for any expenditure with town approval. The town may approve spending money from the capital nonrecurring account for an open space purchase, or vice versa if need be.

Public Comment

Hagan invited participants to make a public comment, asking that comments are limited to two minutes and stated that the board will listen but not respond to questions or comments. A special meeting may be scheduled if needed for the board to discuss tonight's comments before the budget is approved to send to town meeting.

John Kiker asked that a Board of Finance member address the reasons the motion was made to cut the Open Space fund goal from $1,000,000 to $500,000 and Hagan reiterated that the board members would not be answering questions from the public.

The following residents opposed the decision made by the Board of Finance to reduce the goal of the Open Space Fund from $1,000,000 to $500,000, and asked that the board reconsider this decision and return the goal to $1,000.000:

Carol House
Tina West
John Pritchard
Melvin Woody
Alan Sheiness
Lilian King
Park Lord
Matt Elgert
Humphrey Tyler
K. George Mooney
Allen Rosenshine
Allan Dodds Frank
Diana Fiske
Tori Harris
Sue Hessel
Karen Dahle
Ann Bramson
Milton Walters
Bob Cope
Jonathan Butler
Anthony Irving
George Fowler
Beverly Crowther

Many of the residents expressed thanks to the Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen, and other town staff and volunteers for their service to the town. Comments included the importance of having sufficient funds available to be able to act quickly as desirable parcels become available

without the need to gain town approval or rely on partnering with other agencies such as the State or Land Trust, which can burden the property with easements and restrictions for future use. Citizens view the lowered goal as sending a message to townspeople and others that the town is stepping back from its commitment to open space. Commenters pointed to the town's 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development as the guiding document showing the residents' strong desire to protect open space and control the growth of the town. Some questioned the reasoning behind the decision to reduce the goal. Some are concerned that the board of finance is making strategic decisions for the town. The slow growth of residential development has helped to keep the tax rate down. Many commenters expressed that Lyme's commitment to open space is one of the reasons that they chose to live in Lyme.

Mary St. Louis spoke in favor of the proposed budget and believes the reduction in the amount going to the Open Space fund is appropriate.

Kiernan Wholean commented that these are difficult times and he appreciates the Board of Finance efforts to reduce the budget.

Adjournment
Hagan thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting. Hagan called for a motion to adjourn. Duran made the motion, seconded by Evankow, and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Thomas, Secretary

***At the Chair's request, all written communication sent to the Board of Finance prior to the meeting is attached hereto and made part of the public record.**

04/21/2021
To the Town of Lyme Board of Finance:
The Board needs to restore the goal of $1,000,000 for the Open Space Reserve Fund, as previously established. The citizens in this town support open space acquisitions (please recall the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development and town surveys), as part of the town's mission to preserve and protect the land for it's citizens, the region, and the state. The open space of Lyme is an increasing factor in the town's identity. It is a gift to its citizens and regional neighbors. Everyone knows that.

With the rapid rise in real estate values, especially in the past year, $0.5M in the Open Space Reserve Fund is just **insufficient**. Considering the recent acquisitions (e.g. The Johnston Property), having enough in the Open Space Reserve Fund will continue to allow timely acquisitions of important properties that come available. Without it, if a desirable property does become available and the Town people vote to purchase it, the money will have to be borrowed and taxes will have to be raised to pay back the loan with interest. In a worst-case scenario, the purchase may be delayed and lost.

Please restore the previously established goal of funding for the Open Space Reserve Fund, especially in light of the rapid change in real estate valuations in the past year alone. Open Space preservation and protection is, and should remain, a core mission of this town.

Respectfully,
David E. Walker, MD

04/21/2021
Dear Lyme Board of Finance:
The Board of Finance minutes of 4/6/21 state that one member of the board believes that the million dollar goal for the Open Space Reserve Fund is excessive. I did not see noted in these minutes or in earlier ones on what data this belief is based, or why she and three other members of the Board differ with the recommendations by the Board of Selectmen that a goal of $1,000,000 be reached

I ask that the Board of Finance reconsider their decision to defund the Open Space Reserve Fund this year, and reduce funding to $75,000 in future years. I believe that the Fund should be fully funded until the goal of $1,000,000 is reached.

Having been on the board of the Lyme Land Trust, and continuing my involvement with the Land Trust for for almost twenty years, I know that the Land Trust's acquisitions are carefully planned for and financed, and often depend on joining forces with other funding entities, including the town. The Land Trust coffers are not bottomless; they could not simply step in to replace funding from the Open Space Reserve Funding.

The Land Trust works with the Open Space Committee and the town to identify properties that have specific criteria, including contributions to recreational opportunities, the health of our air, water and wildlife, and the slowing of climate change. These are important goals, and ones that cannot be met if the town does not have a healthy Open Space Reserve Fund to allow it be able to help acquire these properties, if approved by residents, without the delay of borrowing money and the painful raising of taxes to pay for the loan and the interest.

The last survey of the opinions of all Lyme citizens placed preservation of open space and protection of natural resources near the top of the list. What good is such a survey when the sincere opinions

expressed by town residents are not going to be taken into account by the people who are charged with helping to implement these goals where possible?

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Guitar

04/23/2021
During the last BOF meeting, it was decided to have new hires contribute 15% of the monthly premium rate for the medical plan. Given the rate structure it should be noted that this approach discriminates against single parents. Below are what I believe will be or likely very close to the medical rates beginning in the fiscal coming year.

From the Connecticut Partnership Plan website
New London County
Rates Effective 7/1/2021-9/30/2021

	Monthly	15%	Δ
EE	$983.16	$147.47	
EE+1	$2,104.76	$315.71	$168 .24
Family	$2,572.08	$385.81	$70.10

The EE+1 rate can be thought of as a composite of monthly rates for an EE+Spouse and for an EE+child. Making some reasonable assumptions about the relative participation of these two cohorts and the relative medical costs of a child versus an adult, one could derive an EE+Spouse rate of $2,169.86 and an EE+child rate of just $1,518.90. Hence using the same employee contribution of $315.71 for both the employee with a spouse and employee who is a single parent with a child, the person with a spouse would be contributing just 14.5% ($315.71/$2,169.86) of the truer underlying cost while the single parent with a child would be contributing 20.8% ($315.71/$1,518.90). The same would be true to some extent for the contribution percentage based on the family rate between the effective contribution percentage for a couple with children (<15%) versus again that for a single parent with more than one child (>15%).

I understand that the board wants to achieve a certain financial effect. All I am saying there are other ways to get there without discriminating against single parents.

Jack Sulger

04/25/2021
To the Lyme Finance Committee:
In looking over the proposed budget's line items, one stood out as dramatically different from all others -- elimination of the contribution to the **Open Space Fund.** I am confused by this change since the 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development offers a very clear directive in support of the town's commitment to our natural resources. The Finance Committee has reversed an established course of action in direct opposition to the Plan and the wishes of town residents.
I am opposed to the reduction or elimination of the town's contribution to the **Open Space Fund.**
I support building this fund to $1,000,000 as recommended by the Selectmen and supported by town groups and town residents.
Given the price of real estate and the direction of real estate prices, I disagree with Kathryn Wayland that this number is excessive. She, Dan Hagan, David Brown, and Peter Evankow have made an imprudent and ill-advised decision.
Please restore the **Open Space Fund** contribution and recommit to the $1,000,000 goal.

George Fowler
14 Birch Mill Rd
Lyme, CT 06371

04/25/2021
Dear members of the Lyme Board of Finance,

My wife Leslie, daughter Emily and I are quite concerned that funding for open space acquisition has been left out of your proposed budget. This omission is not in line with the high priority placed on the preservation of open space in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development. This Plan is meant to be a guide for the Town's boards and committees. It seems that, for some unknown reason, the Board of Finance has chosen to ignore the wishes of the majority of the residents of Lyme (as documented in the Plan of Conservation and Development, and evidenced by the high local usage of our open spaces) by de-emphasizing funding for open space. We strongly disagree with this decision and hope that you will please reconsider, and properly fund Lyme's Open Space Reserve Fund with an eye toward the previous goal of $1,000,000.

Respectfully submitted,
Ralph, Leslie and Emily Lewis
24 Ferry Road, Lyme, CT

04/26/2021
Dear Finance Board Members--

As a tax paying resident of the Lyme community I am concerned about the recent decision to to stop contributing money to the Open Space Reserve Fund this year and to limit future yearly contributions to $75,000. At best the decision is puzzling. Beyond that the reasons for this decision are opaque and the potential harm considerable. Lyme's Plan of Conservation and Development reflects the wish of the majority of residents to support funding for open space. Yet the Board of Finance seems to be headed in the opposite direction – without an adequate explanation of the members' reasoning. Should a property suitable for acquisition come onto the market and the town's voters make the decision to purchase it, money would have to be borrowed, taxes raised to pay back interest on loans needed to finance the purchase and significant delays encountered. Whereas, should the fund be maintained and added to, the

cost to taxpayers would be less and the expressed desires of the town's voters honored. Which raises the question: how is the public interest be served by the board's recent decision? Restoring the goal of building toward $1,000.000 in the Open Space Reserve Fund seems a wiser course-- both monetarily and in terms of protecting the natural resources of which Lyme is justly proud.

Sincerely, Janet Roach

04/27/2021
Dear Budget Committee,

We all have a vested interest in protecting the beautiful rural character of our town. I support spending tax dollars in support of our open space initiatives.
A lot of hard work has gone into making Lyme a special place. Let's support those efforts.

Rob Roach

04/27/2021
To Whom It May Concern,

I'm a resident of the town of Lyme and recently learned the decision made by the board of finance to limit the funding for open space in our town. Because I'm unable to attend the meeting tonight I wanted to summarize and share my thoughts for your consideration. Before I offer my thoughts, I'd like to acknowledge that with each of your decisions as a board of finance there is a give and take, and that we as a community need to honor both sides of the equation.

I believe the decision to cut Open Space funding should be reversed. It does not fall in line with what I believe are the mainstays of our town: historic preservation, land preservation and community. To me, these are the greatest assets of our town and what keeps Lyme prospering and even promotes greater promise for the future.

This decision seems to be based on "strong presence of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust", which does not bring into account future opportunities to preserve land in our town. Limiting our Open Space fund to $500,000 and capping contributions at $75,000 annually will put the town in a position to either not invest in Open Space (which seems counter to the mainstays of our town) or require a tax increase to support such investments.

As I stated, every decision comes with a give and take, an opportunity cost, and I have not seen what the opportunity is in this equation. I only see the cost and it appears to have detriment on the town and people of Lyme.

I hope you'll consider reversing the decision to allow for a more thorough consideration and communication as to WHY this decision is being made (what does the town gain) and more involvement from the taxpayers of Lyme.

Thank you,
Jacqueline Shluger

04/27/2021
I am opposed to the reduction or elimination of the town's contribution to the **Open Space Fund.**

William Denow
164 Hamburg Rd
Lyme ,CT 06371

04/27/2021
Hi Ms. Thomas,

I am unable to attend the Board of Finance public hearing tonight, so I am submitting these written comment in lieu of being able to participate tonight.

I was disappointed to learn that the Board of Finance voted to cut the Town's Open Space Fund goal from $1M to $500K. The Town's finances are currently solid and this is exactly the time to invest in the hugely beneficial town effort of preserving open space. It benefits the Town tremendously by preserving what make the Town special, serves a crucial environmental function, while also helping to keep tax rates low well into the future. This is a very shortsighted decision.

I recommend that the Town re-commit to its goal of a $1M Open Space Fund and fully fund that goal this year and going forward. It is a wise investment of the Town's residents' tax dollars.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

James & Sallie Schwartz
44 Ferry Rd, Lyme

04/27/2021
Thank you for the opportunity to put on the record my thoughts on the value of continuing to fully fund the Open Space Reserve Fund.

As a fairly recent resident of the town (since 2015), I have come to understand that Lyme's open spaces are critical infrastructure that truly belong to all Lyme residents as well, in a very real sense, to our neighbors in surrounding towns and visitors from virtually anywhere.

While there may be other competing interests, including affordable housing, it also is clear, at least to me, that these open spaces – beautifully maintained at no cost to the town and its residents – are a powerful attraction in bringing new residents here as well as an enduring pleasure for those who have spent their lives here.

This is truly a long-term investment, but one that provides real value to us as residents of a town that has for many years been in the forefront of the land trust movement. While lower density is an obvious benefit to all of us in Lyme, equally obvious is the beneficial impact of our stewardship of these open spaces on the ecological integrity of the Lower Connecticut River Estuary. Lyme's leadership role here is noteworthy.

Greg Miller
62 Ferry Road, Hadlyme

04/27/2021

Lyme is a special community and as relative newcomers, my husband and I have come to understand that the trails of Lyme are one of the town's great treasures. This pandemic year has revealed them to be much needed and much used. We hike regularly, in nearly every preserve, and have seen the increase in hikers, including families with young children and teens, seniors and small groups of friends. The trails are special and they are beloved, and investment in them is a worthy use of our tax dollars.

As members of the community you surely know this. And I recognize that when there is need around us and competing demands for our tax dollars, investment in open space may seem like something suited for another day, another time. But investment in conservation is hope for the future and after the devastating year just passed, such hope is precious. Please fund the Open Space Reserve Fund fully.

Joan Motyka

Lyme Land Trust
PO Box 1002, Lyme, Connecticut 06371 • 860.434.5051

4/26/2021

TO: Town of Lyme's Board of Finance
FROM: Lyme Land Conservation Trust

Re: Town Funding for Open Space Acquisition

The Lyme Land Trust is responding to the decision of the Town's Board of Finance to reduce from $1,000,000 to $500,000 the Town fund for the acquisition of open space. We understand that the thought was expressed during the Board's deliberations that the Land Trust would be able to make up for this reduction in the fund by shouldering more of the responsibility for preserving open space in Lyme.

The collaboration between the Town of Lyme and the Land Trust since its founding in 1966 has been long and fruitful. We have consistently worked together to preserve land of great conservation value in Lyme. While much land in Town has been preserved, more remains to be done in order to ensure that the quiet, rural and historic character of the Town continues to be respected. The Town's residents have welcomed – indeed, have enthusiastically supported – the preservation ethic practiced by the Town, the Land Trust and our other conservation partners, the State and the Nature Conservancy. How many times have we heard residents say "this is why we live here?" It is particularly noteworthy that the 2015 Town Plan of Conservation and Development questionnaire reflects that 91% of respondents favor Town involvement in land acquisition.

We note that land preservation benefits all of the residents of Lyme. When the Land Trust acquires property, we fund the purchase in significant part through fund raising from a small subset of our residents. While this is entirely appropriate, it remains important, we believe, that all residents have at least some part in preserving what we all love about Lyme. Among other things, preserving land preserves the character of our Town, provides recreational opportunities for all and undoubtedly has a favorable impact on house and land values. When the Town acquires or participates in acquiring open space this objective of universal resident participation is met.

While we understand that the Board of Finance considers many factors in compiling the budget, we urge it to reconsider cutting the target funding for open space. In addition to the considerations noted above, we believe that more weight should be given to the following facts: Lyme's finances are in excellent condition, Lyme residents pay some of the lowest real estate taxes in the State, the Town's Open Space Committee, the Town body with the greatest knowledge of the preservation need, strongly favors the $1,000,000 target and our Selectmen have requested target funding at that level.

We make the points in this letter in the service of preserving the strong partnership between the Town and the Land Trust in pursuing our joint mission of "conserving in perpetuity for the public benefit Lyme's natural, scenic and historic land and water resources."

Respectfully submitted,

John Pritchard, on behalf of the Lyme Land Trust Board

SKIPHINE
PHOTOGRAPHY

April 26, 2021

Lyme Board of Finance
Town of Lyme
480 Hamburg Road
Lyme, CT 06371

To who it may concern -

Because we will be unable to attend the upcoming Public Meeting via Zoom, we are voicing our concerns over a proposal to dramatically reduce the Open Space Reserve Fund from the Town's budget - both now and in the future. While we agree Lyme can not and should not be obligated to purchase every parcel of land that comes on the market, our preserved land is exactly what makes Lyme so special. The Fund has always operated and purchased land only after careful consideration and the residents are grateful for its mere presence whenever a valuable parcel becomes available. How many other towns envy the success of our OSRF because it has been a vital part of our town's budget? To stop maintaining the fund is short-sighted and not in our best interest. A few years ago, the town conducted a survey asking its residents what matters most to those living here and we placed a high priority on this very topic - preserving the land. How can the Board of Finance completely disregard what we want by limiting the OSRF's ability to fulfill our wishes? This is so wrong.

Please reconsider your intensions to limit the OSRF and continue to make it a vital and necessary part of our budget planning.

Sincerely,

Skip & Deb Hine

skip@skiphine.com
25 Joshuatown Road, Lyme CT 06371
(860) 304-4147
skiphine.com

4/26/2021
TO: Town of Lyme Finance Committee
FROM: Town of Lyme Open Space Committee

The Town of Lyme's Open Space Committee is extremely disappointed to learn of the Board of Finance's vote to reduce the funding goal for the town's Open Space Reserve Fund from $1,000,000 to $500,000. This decision is contrary to the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendation and puts in jeopardy the town's ability to act quickly when a suitable property becomes available. It is our understanding town finances are in excellent shape mirrored by the fact that the town's mill rate, one of the lowest in the state, would remain unchanged for the third year in a row even taking into account the Selectmen's funding recommendation. We feel this decision is shortsighted as open space reduces tax burdens and provides other, substantial benefits to the town.

Economic sustainability - Numerous studies demonstrate that compared to residential development open space requires minimum town services such as infrastructure and maintenance costs nor do open spaces increase school enrollments. In fact, Lyme's open spaces contribute to our low tax rate. In addition, our forests sequester and store greenhouse gases, maintain water quality by filtering pollutants in runoff and recharge groundwater supplies contributing to the land's economic value.

Social sustainability - By retaining our connections with the land we preserve our cultural heritage and history. Open space contributes to our feeling of place and fosters rural qualities such as aesthetics, recreation opportunities, spiritual connections with the land and traditional uses while protecting this legacy for future generations. Lyme's open spaces define our town character.

Biological/ecological sustainability – Lyme is exceptional when it comes to our natural resources. We are a near-coastal community with over six miles on the Connecticut River. Our population is low at 2570, although it has increased 25% since 1990. The Eightmile River and surrounding lands are recognized by Congress as one of the nation's Wild and Scenic River systems. Audubon Connecticut designated portions of Lyme and surrounding towns as part of the "Lyme Forest Block", the only landscape-sized "Important Bird Area" in Connecticut. On a town-wide scale our many protected open spaces ensure the stability and resilience of biological and physical systems while preserving linkages for wildlife migration and dispersal thus reducing fragmentation and parcelization of properties.

The numerous open spaces the town has saved over the years along with contributions from our state and local partners is a remarkable accomplishment. These public lands not only define our character, but serve the community well. This past year, during the pandemic it was our open

spaces that helped many of us through these difficult times. Overwhelmingly, Lyme residents support town involvement in open space acquisition. The 2015 Town Plan of Conservation and Development questionnaire asked citizens about what the town's role should be regarding "Conserving Land and Open Space". 91% of respondents were in favor of encouraging town involvement.

There still remain a number of properties that would better serve the town as open space rather than for development. An insufficient reserve fund puts in jeopardy the town's ability to procure these properties. We need to be in a position to act when these become available and an adequate Open Space Reserve Fund allows us to act quickly. We strongly urge the Finance Committee to reconsider their position of cutting the established funding goals for the Open Space Reserve Fund. This approach is truly in the best interests of Lyme.

Respectfully Submitted
Town of Lyme Open Space Committee

Paul Armond
Bob Cope
Anthony Irving
Parker Lord
Bob Standish
Lucius Stark
Humphrey Tyler

4/25/2021
RE: Testimony to the Lyme Board of Finance Public Hearing April 27, 2021
FROM: Town of Lyme Open Space Coordinator

Dear Board,

As Open Space Coordinator of the Town of Lyme, and as a concerned Lyme resident, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the April 6, 2021 Board of Finance vote to reduce the goal for the Open Space Reserve Fund to $500,000, and to limit future yearly contributions to $75,000. The goal of $1,000,000, which had been set 3 years ago, was within reach and the Selectmen had earmarked money to accomplish this goal in this year's budget without an increase in the mill rate.

Please consider the will of the majority of Town residents, as demonstrated by the high priority placed upon the preservation of open space in the Town's Plan of Conservation, which is meant to be a guide for all of the Town's boards and committees.

The Town's Open Space Reserve Fund was established years ago to provide for open space purchases. Budgeted contributions from the Town build up this fund, so that it will have enough money to make a purchase, or help with a purchase, should the need arise. Without sufficient money in the fund, if a desirable property does come available and the Town people vote to purchase it, the money will have to be borrowed and taxes will be raised to pay back the loan with interest. In a worst-case scenario, the purchase may be delayed and lost. Not fully funding the Open Space Fund is short sighted and will cost the Town more in the long run.

We learned a lesson when the Johnston Preserve was bought by the Town. It had been a property of interest for protection by Lyme for many years. Covering the highest point in Lyme, the preserve sits at the intersection of three watersheds that have all been identified by local, national and international organizations as priorities for protection: the Eightmile River Watershed, Whalebone Creek Watershed and the main stem of the Connecticut River. And the Property also abuts over 1700 acres of protected property—a significant block of core forest. Protecting the Johnston Property prevented fragmentation of a valuable green corridor which provides the habitat vital for threatened wildlife. When the property came up for sale four years ago, there was only $369,000 in the Open Space Reserve Fund. The purchase price for the 250-acre property was $1,460,000. After the Town residents overwhelmingly voted to acquire the property, the Town was granted funding for %60 of the purchase price by the CT DEEP Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition and had to borrow the rest (beyond what was in the fund). This caused a significant delay in the acquisition, as the grant application and pay-out took more than two years. In addition, it cost taxpayers more money to pay back the loan. That is why it is so important to have this reserve ready. With a full $1,000,000 reserve, the owners could have received most of their money up-front and the Town would have been able to wait for the reimbursement from the State. Not all landowners will be that patient.

In the March 16 minutes, a member questioned the need for the town to have such a high balance in the open space fund "given the strong presence of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust". It is unfair to put the burden on the Lyme Land Trust to provide all the funds for open space as it becomes available. As a member of the board of directors of this private non-profit organization, I can attest that the Lyme Land Trust doesn't have that kind of money. They must fund raise for large purchases. Not all landowners have the luxury or desire to wait for this to happen.

The Open Space Committee works with the Lyme Land Trust, other partners, and town officials to work out the best possible means of identifying, funding, and acquiring key parcels for open space. Suitability for multiple use (such as the ability to accommodate an affordable housing lot–as was done with the Young property) are taken into account. Properties are thoughtfully evaluated based upon established criteria; such as adjacency to other open space, ecological importance, scenic/cultural/geological importance, agricultural value, property size, and funding considerations. The creation of wildlife corridors and blocks of core forests are major factors in the considerations for open space value. Connected preserved properties that form large blocks of core forest not only provide sanctuary for wildlife and humans, but they work as carbon sinks to combat climate change and filter the air and water of pollutants. There are still several parcels in Lyme that fit the criteria and that it would be in the best interest of Lyme to preserve as open space.

I have always been very proud of the Town of Lyme and its residents for our strong unity in protecting our natural and cultural resources. Especially during this time of physical isolation, people have seen more appreciation for the preserves than ever. Land preservation is for the greater good. The Town of Lyme's preserves enhance the quality of life for everyone regardless of status. It is the opposite of elitist. The Town of Lyme owns and protects Hartman Park, Johnston, Mt. Archer Woods, Young Preserve, and Selden Landing. The Town owns Jewett Preserve and Czikowsky Hill with The Nature Conservancy.

I ask you to please restore the open space fund goal to $1,000,000. And I urge you to revoke the future annual budget limit of $75,000 to the open space fund. The Town needs to be able to act quickly if a desirable property comes on the market. In today's real estate market, a $500,000 fund limit is too low, and when that is depleted, only $75,000 a year will take too long to build it up again.

Sincerely,

Wendolyn Hill
Town of Lyme Open Space Coordinator
Lyme Land Trust Board of Directors