

Don Lowe First Selectman Column 01/12/2026

Right at the top here I want to say that I ended last week's column with some encouragement towards ice fishing, but the recent warming trend has, in my opinion, made ice fishing unsafe. Until some cooler weather comes into our area, please be aware that the ice is currently unsafe to be out on.

The Sherman School is performing a production of "Newsies" this Saturday at 7pm. Due to the current renovation/repair of the school, the production will be held in New Fairfield's school auditorium. Speaking of the Sherman school renovation/repair project, I attended a school building committee meeting today. All is going very well so far, and the project remains on schedule. Several of us attend a weekly update every Wednesday on site and that serves as another opportunity to watch over this grand project.

Last week, along with Andrea Maloney, I attended a Council of Governments meeting in Ridgefield that outlined and attempted to explain the new housing bill approved last fall by the State General Assembly. At this juncture, it's difficult to determine how this bill will affect us in Sherman. At some point the state might – and I stress "might" -- make a recommendation (or possibly a mandate) about how many affordable units Sherman will be held responsible for building. These could possibly involve accessory apartments as well as actual new homes. There's no direct answer yet as to how we would be penalized if we don't hit our quota, and in fact, it was indicated that we might be rewarded for hitting our quota (if there is one) instead of being punished. As you can probably tell, I left the meeting, as I believe most people did, with few certain answers.

In my view, affordable housing is a profoundly important issue in this state. People, especially young people, need to be able to afford to live here or else we lose well-educated, hard-working people to other states that offer less expensive homes and rentals. However, asking (or requiring) smaller Connecticut municipalities to solve this issue is somewhat unrealistic. Unless a town properly plans on its own for the growth that affordable housing can bring, then the increase in services by inordinate population growth can require more services, more taxes, and have an adverse effect to affordability: it can potentially make the Town "unaffordable" to those on fixed incomes or those who currently struggle to make ends meet.

Affordable housing in a town the size of Sherman is not a bad thing. Attracting young families and people of diverse socioeconomics is good in several ways including increasing the pool of volunteers for entities such as emergency services. But it needs to be planned for and managed within the usual strategies and guidelines that Sherman has held forth for decades.

Whether this current housing bill will be effective in creating affordable housing in Connecticut remains to be seen, but, frankly, I see very little upside in this bill for Sherman and other towns our size. The most positive result from it for Sherman, based on what I've seen so far, is that it will do nothing. In addition, I truly wish that more policies constructed by our state legislators came by suggestions from the bottom (the towns) and traveled up (to the state) as opposed to mandated down from the state to the municipalities. The state government, too often, doesn't know us. And that puts us on thin ice.