

Don Lowe First Selectman Column 02/09/26

As I have written in past columns this year, it's budget season and the Board of Selectmen (BOS) acting as Board of Finance will be parsing, editing, and advising all of the individual budgets of town boards and commissions as well as the budgets of larger entities such as the Sherman School, Public Works, the Sherman Volunteer Fire Department, the Sherman Library, and the Candlewood Lake Authority. This will be my ninth budget as your First Selectman, and it looks in preview to be the most challenging.

Some built-in increases such as rising insurance costs and more expensive materials will pose some of the challenges. The highest costs of the Sherman School renovation/repair bonding come in the first three years, so that adds to our challenges. There are requests for some more staffing by various Town entities, and we will have to weigh the pros and cons of those against the backdrop of a tough budget year.

We have been fortunate over these last eight years to have been able to offer four tax decreases and two flat budgets with minimal increases in the other two budgets. I hope to communicate the past budgets in a more granular year-by-year basis in next week's column, but what we will probably learn is that property taxes are approximately 8% lower than they were eight years ago. I don't know of another town who can report that as taxes almost always, generally, increase. For example, had Sherman's property taxes increased by 1% every year, they would be at least 8% (not accounting for compounding interest) higher. But ours are lower after eight years.

Am I preparing you, the taxpayer, for an increase this year? Possibly, though I don't know what holds for our budget until all of it is put together. So, let's hold off regarding anything like that. What I can promise with surety is that services will continue in the most effective and efficient way and our Sherman lifestyle, which is mighty terrific, will carry on productively. Sherman is a wonderful town to live in, and I feel blessed and grateful to be here.

Thank you to those who wished me a happy birthday last week. I had cupcakes with everyone here at Town Hall, fielded a whole bunch of well-wishes, and even was sung to in my office by a group of talented Sherman School students. It was fun to turn 38...