

**Town of Sherman
Board of Selectmen Monthly Meeting
Mallory Town Hall and Zoom
September 25, 2025 at 7pm**

Present: First Selectman Don Lowe; Selectman Joel Bruzinski; Selectman Bob Ostrosky; Treasurer Andrea Maloney

Absent: Business Manager Liz LaVia

Invited & Audience: PW Supervisor Kris Fazzone; Jean Robbins; Chris Fuchs; James Munch; Roland Hanley; Dave Jellen; John Dwyer; Jen Freed; Liz Haney; Frank Keller; Scott Murray; Rachel Booth; Connor McGowan; Peter Collins; Jeff Rumpf; Mr. and Mrs. Michael Pepi;

Clerk: Nicole Zegley

Call to Order: First Selectman Don Lowe called the meeting to order at 7:00pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment: Elizabeth Haney read a letter aloud to the public.

Dear Don, Bob and Joel,

On behalf of the Sherman Historical Society, we extend our deepest thanks to each of you for your professional support as town officials and your personal support in making the Sherman Historical Society's 50th Anniversary celebration "The Militia is Coming" such a wonderful success.

Don - *Thank you for participating in costume and for presenting the official Proclamation, which will be proudly displayed at SHS.*

Bob - *Thank you for heading up the Parking Committee. Parking ran very smoothly, and we are grateful to the town for allowing us the use of the entire school parking lot and the Senior Bus for our visitors. A very special thanks as well to **Bob** and **Rich Devine** for stepping in at the last minute to handle the crosswalk in the center of town. It was an exhausting long day for you both!
THANK YOU!*

We would also like to extend our appreciation and thanks to:

Chris Fuchs, Chief, Sherman Volunteer Fire Department, and the SVFD members who were on duty Saturday, either at the event or at the Firehouse: Kris Fazzone (Assistant Chief, EMS), Ken Hoffman, Spencer Hauspurg, James Mandracchia, Dylan Saunders, Andrew Fazzone, Jen Jalbert, and Jim DeSalvo. Thankfully, no medical emergencies arose, but their readiness was invaluable.

Jim Reilly, Director, Officer of Emergency Management, for preparing such a comprehensive Event Emergency Plan to address weather, evacuation, or other contingencies. We were fortunate not to need it, but its presence was a great reassurance.

Kris Fazzone, Supervisor, Public Works and staff, for providing street cones, parking signs, and safety vests for our parking and crosswalk volunteers.

John Wrenn, Director, and Fran Frattini, Chair, Park & Recreation, for making Veterans Field, the Beach, and Colonial Lot available for additional parking.

Everyone pitched in and did their part, and it truly showed.

Saturday's Revolutionary War reenactment brought Sherman's past vividly to life. Together, we shared with the community not only the drama of history, but also the daily realities faced by ordinary citizens at the founding of our nation – farmers leaving their fields to serve in the militia, families coping with shortages, and a town pulling together in uncertain times.

History is not just dates and battles; it is the story of real people. By recreating daily life, trades, and traditions, we offered our visitors a chance to experience both the struggles and the resilience of our ancestors.

*The Sherman Historical Society is proud to preserve and share these stories. This 50th Anniversary event reflected not only our mission, but also the tremendous support of the Town of Sherman, local organizations, **and all of you who value our shared past.***

With gratitude,

*Elizabeth Mard Haney
President
Sherman Historical Society*

John Dwyer of Spring Lake Road inquired as to the status of 23 Route 39 North.

First Selectman Don Lowe responded that John Cody will go out to the property to assess and check items on the list.

John Dwyer expressed miscommunications and contact made between the Town's attorney and his own.

First Selectman Don Lowe declined to comment further at Mr. Dwyer's comments about attorneys.

James Munch spoke out against John Dwyer and how he was ruining this families life.

First Selectman Don Lowe reminded Mr. Munch to speak to the Board and not individuals in the public audience.

Jen Freed of 61 Church Road offered her support of David Jellen and his lease renewal.

Jeff Rumpf of 44 Taber Road commented that Happy as new residents to Sherman that the history and agriculture of the town was a draw for him and his wife. They love living near a working farm and often bring their friends to visit it.

Scott Murray of 1 Taber Road added that David Jellen is an asset to the town and offered his support.

Frank Keller of 2 Anderson Ext. offered his support of Happy Acres Farm and added it was similar to a shrine in Japan.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Pepi of 70 Route 39 South offered their support of David Jellen and Happy Acres Farm and have taken their children there often.

Rachel Booth of 5 Gelston Road also offered her support to David Jellen and also buys her hay from Happy Acres.

Peter Collins of 9 Fox Run commented that Tony Hapanowich, former long-time owner and farmer, would be very proud of what David Jellen has done up at the farm.

Connor McGowan of Route 37 Center added that the Board will make the right decision.

Correspondence: First Selectman Don Lowe continued by reading written correspondences.

***Hi Don.** I will not be able to make tonight's Board of Selectmen meeting so I would like to register my support of renewing the Happy Acres Farm lease. As part of these discussions, I would like to see a closer working relationship between the Farm and the Town that would include using the Farm for educational purposes as you described in your Jan 10, 2025 letter to the community, and using the Farm as a model of sustainable farming practices in keeping with Sherman POCD.*

*Thanks,
Anne Weisberg*

**September 25, 2025
Board of Selectmen
Town of Sherman, CT 06784
Re: Lease Renewal for Happy Acres Farm**

I am Stephanie Warren, residing at 107 Route 39 North in Sherman, and part of my property adjoins Happy Acres Farm. I am writing in support of renewing David Jellen's lease for a significant long-term period to give David stability and security. He has taken excellent care of the farm and is a conscientious and generous neighbor, always maintaining fence lines between the properties and offering to help me when needed. Farming is a difficult profession, and the town is lucky to have a young competent person like David to run Happy Acres. I hope the town will provide significant incentives to help him make a viable living on a working farm.

Farming requires long-term planning, and any underlying lease should reflect that. A ten, fifteen, or twenty-year lease would allow a farmer to realize some of the economic benefits of his own investments in the land, and provide incentives to stay. Long-term leaseholds are very common in many countries and situations; with appropriate checks and escape clauses they work effectively. I hope the Town will grant a very long lease for David so that he has an incentive to plan and invest his energy into making a decent living there.

Appropriate acreage for the number of animals needed to be economically viable is also important. There are known formulas for how many acres of grass and acres for hay are needed per animal. Be sure that the Happy Acres Farm has enough acreage to run an economically viable operation.

I regret that I am unable to be present at the Board of Selectmen Meeting tonight, but would be happy to discuss any of these issues with the Board at another time.

*Sincerely,
Stephanie R. Warren*

September 9th, 2025
Dear Board of Selectmen,

I've been made aware that children from the school were brought to Happy Acres farm at least once before the summer break but have not heard anything since. I was wondering where the partnership between the farm and the school is at in this new phase because Don said this was something the town would be pursuing, yet it seems to me like a show was made of sitting the children in a tractor in order to alleviate my prior concerns, and nothing else is planned for the future.

I strongly believe that since the school is such a sensitive subject and the town of Sherman is trying to get new students in the district, a potential agricultural program should be taken more seriously.

Since the town does not seem to be interested in changing the current arrangements regarding who runs the property, should the terms and duration of the next lease not be public knowledge?

It is clear to me that the farm is only being used to benefit of one person, when it is town property and should be run to benefit the town, not be free room and board for someone who has no interest in his community.

Thank you for your time,

Charles Fasig

September 25, 2025

Dear Selectmen,

A half dozen years ago when our town purchased Happy Acres, it put out a Request for Proposal, essentially looking for a Property Manager who would maintain the farm's good looks that it had in owner Hapanovich's final years.

In choosing David Jellen among the applicants, the BOS acquired not just a Property Manager, but a down-to-earth young farmer who raised egg-laying chickens, beef cattle and even pigs – a source of good food for many of us.

When the BOS and David negotiate a new lease, I hope it will include provisions enabling David to make a decent living from his salary as Property Manager and the supplemental income – and he does need to do so – is by utilizing more of the farm's roughly 99 acres in order to raise more beef cattle.

Both Sherman's 2023 Plan of Conservation and Development and the Conservation Commission's Natural Resource Inventory emphasize the importance of promoting and supporting farming. Our town and the area around us have lost many of the farms we once had.

How fortunate we are to have Happy Acres, a real farm, and David Jellen, a real farmer. Together they deserve all the support we can give them.

Colette Shulman

Member of the Conservation Commission

Administrative Items:

a. Approval of August 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Motioned By: Selectman Joel Bruzinski

Seconded By: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

Approval of September 17, 2025 Special Meeting Minutes

Motioned By: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Seconded By: Selectman Joel Bruzinski

All in Favor: Unanimous

b. Financial Review: Business Manager Liz LaVia was absent. First Selectman Don Lowe updated the board by reading her report that September was tracking normally. The first audit is complete and the second is underway, with one left to be done by the end of 2025.

c. Tax Refunds: First Selectman Don Lowe announced tax refunds for approval.

A Motion was made to approve a tax refund of \$1095.58.

Motioned By: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded By: Selectman Joel Bruzinski

All in Favor: Unanimous

d. Holiday Calendar for 2026: First Selectman Don Lowe moved the meeting to the approval of the Holiday Calendar.

A Motion was made to approve the Holiday Calendar for 2026.

Motioned By: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded By: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

e. Board of Selectmen Meeting Dates for 2026: First Selectman Don Lowe continued with the approval of the 2026 meeting dates.

A Motion was made to approve the Board of Selectmen Meeting dates for 2026.

Motioned By: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded By: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

f. Acknowledgments/Appointments: None

Information & Discussion:

a. SVFD: Fire Chief Chris Fuchs updated that the Fire Department has responded to 302 emergency calls for service. Members are using the month of September to train on technical and search and rescue skills. They are currently taking advantage of the nicer Fall weather for training before temperatures drop. Two new certified EMT's have completed their training and two new members have joined the ranks and are getting acclimated.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky inquired as to the status of the new radios approval at last month's meeting. Chief Fuchs respond that an approximated 6 month turn around is expected due to the specialty items built to order nature.

First Selectman Don Lowe thanked Chief Fuchs for their flexibility with hosting the Sherman School band and other events.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky echoed the sentiment of thanks and support for the Historic Society and other community events.

- b. Public Works:** PW Supervisor Kris Fazzone updated the board that 1/3 of the townwide roadside cleanup has been completed in preparation for winter. The trimming cuts back further along the roadside than summertime cleanup. Veterans Field came out great in time for the town's softball tournament. Some extra work will still be needed on the baseball field to level the ridges. Supervisor Fazzone attended a Speed Management class out of UCONN, discussing traffic calming devices. Roof work on the gazebo and Park and Rec beach office will be beginning soon.

First Selectman Don Lowe approved the cost difference of \$800 for a CDL Class A license for a Public Works employee.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky inquired about current tree work efforts. PW Supervisor Kris Fazzone explained that tree work was an ongoing thing and Gentile was working in the parks.

- c. Sherman School Renovation Update:** Selectman Joel Bruzinski explained that he has made a few visits to the project area and everything appears to be running on point and on schedule. First Selectman Don Lowe added that the temporary school building is also running smoothly.
- d. Sherman School Renovation Project “Clerk of the Works” Position:** First Selectman Don Lowe led the discussion on the “Clerk of the Works” position. The position would include coordinating tasks and strategies, communicating back to the board, and they would oversee the task checklists of each company's job. Selectman Bob Ostrosky stated that his feelings remained the same. A cap of 8 hours a week unless approved by the First Selectman and an assurance that the Board of Selectmen can terminate at any time. Selectman Joel Bruzinski was in agreement and offered that the applicant should be an organic fit to the position and not forced. First Selectman Don Lowe confirmed that the joblisting would be posted next week in local papers and the Town website.
- e. Happy Acres Leases:** First Selectman Don Lowe explained the results of a special meeting on September 17, 2025 regarding the Happy Acres lease. He continued by stating that the town attorney will be writing a 5 year guaranteed renewable lease by the leasee, not the town. This will protect David Jellen from future Boards. In the event of any wrongdoing on David Jellen's part, it would move to a town meeting and be voted on by the townspeople. First Selectman Don Lowe also suggested a stipend increase of \$7000 from \$35,000 to \$42,000. It will also be added to the lease that if David Jellen decides to not renew or is relieved of his lease, the leasee will be given one year to leave the property (ample time to relocate cattle, equipment etc.). First Selectman Don Lowe explained that there is also another leasee up at the farm. The Lyscynski

Brothers currently lease 12-½ acres south of the farm and the east side of 39 North there is another 23-½ acres. First Selectman Don Lowe proposed a change of giving the 12-½ acres to David Jellen for additional grazing pasture.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky requested two additions that would add more protection for the Town. The first being immediate eviction of the leasee with any criminal activity. The second item requested was a lease buyout for the Town, where the town would pay the leasee if they needed to break the lease.

Selectman Joel Bruzinski suggested a buyout based on the percentage of the remainder of the lease.

First Selectman Don Lowe informed the board that the lease would be approved as it had been done in the past, by the Board of Selectmen and not by Town Meeting, and does not require another RFP.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky suggested a few year lease with auto renewal, and a buyout of 5 years multiplied by the stipend and divided in half.

First Selectman Don Lowe clarified that any modifications made to the lease after it is written is subject to a Town Meeting for approval.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky stated that he was in agreement with First Selectman Don Lowe on the pasture changes and the stipend increase.

Selectman Joel Bruzinski acknowledged the outpouring of support for David Jellen taking over the pastures. At the time that the lease was originally written, Mr. Jellen was an unknown entity and has since proven himself. Selectman Joel Bruzinski continued by suggesting that if the town is looking to tidy things up and have the farm under one lease, that process should begin now, giving all parties involved ample notice. Also suggested was a shorter lease for the other leasee.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky clarified that the lease has a five year renewal, but carried a 90 day cancellation out for both parties.

First Selectman Don Lowe and Selectman Bob Ostrosky both agreed that it should remain a five year renewable lease for the Lyscynski lease of the 23-½ acres bull pasture.

First Selectman Don Lowe also clarified that each leasee will be responsible for repairs to the fences and the upkeep around that area for the acres that they are leasing. With all of the selectmen in agreement the lease will be sent to the town attorney and the leasees before the next meeting in October.

- f. Proposed Sherman Senior Center Update:** First Selectman Don Lowe updated the board on the informational forum that took place on Sunday with the Senior

Center Building Committee. Saturday October 25th the next meeting will take place at Mallory Town Hall. The new Senior Center will take some of the burden off of Charter Hall, as well as being a great place for Sherman Seniors. A Town Meeting will likely be November 22, 2025 followed by a Referendum on December 6, 2025. Nixle will also be used, along with making it more accessible on the Town website.

- g. Scout House Update:** First Selectman Don Lowe updated that Contractor Joe Beatty is currently working on the inside. The proposed completion date should be the end of October. A celebration or ribbon cutting may follow.
- h. Hometown Heroes Project:** First Selectman Don Lowe announces that two applications have been submitted to date and will be displayed around the town green.
- i. Holiday Lights Tour:** First Selectman Don Lowe brought attention to a collaboration between the Parks and Rec and Sherman Art Commission for the First Annual Sherman Holiday Light Tour. Families can register to decorate their home for judging during the holiday season. Prizes will be awarded.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky suggested offering local businesses advertisements on the back of the tour maps for a nominal fee.

Other Business: None

Public Comment:

Roland Hanley Hillside Drive - Last Thursday's Tribune article explained that at the Board of Education meeting, over \$300,000 emergency expenses was asked for. Is that in addition to the \$2.5 million voted on.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky explained that he was not at the meeting but he will be inquiring at the next Building Committee meeting.

Jen Freed of Church Road suggested a stipend increase of 5% per year per CPI guidelines.

Resident Tim agreed with Jen Freed.

Bill McCann agreed with protecting the town with the new lease and other boards.

First Selectman Don Lowe clarified that if a future board wanted to make Mr. Jellen leave, the town would have to decide on it, not the board.

Jim Munch expressed his concerns over the home on the farm and its mold safety, furnace, air ducts.

Jen Freed of Church Road expressed her concerns that the school isn't utilizing the outside as much as they should.

Adjournment:

Motioned By: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Time: 8:12pm

Respectfully Submitted By Nicole Zegley