

**Town of Sherman
Board of Selectmen
Budget Intake
Mallory Town Hall
February 18, 2026 at 7PM**

Present: First Selectman Don Lowe; Selectman Joel Bruzinski; Selectman Bob Ostrosky; Treasurer Andrea Maloney, Business Manager Liz LaVia

Absent:

Invited & Audience: PW Supervisor Kris Fazzino; Jeff Matusow; Ashleigh Blake; Katy Osborn and the Library Board of Trustees; Chris Fuchs; Chris DaCunha; Dave Febbraio

Clerk: Nicole Zegley

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

Sherman Library: Library Executive Director, Ashleigh Blake presented the library budget to the Board. The Sherman Library is an association, which means 45% of its operating budget comes from town grants. The remainder is raised through membership, fundraising, gifts and grants. Last fiscal year the library loaned 24,667 items to patrons, hosted over 474 free programs, 8,397 attendees, attendance is up 13%, adult programs are up 10%, children's programs are up 12.5%, and circulation is up 8%. The Sherman School library students are also being hosted at this time during renovations. A "Fiber to the Library" grant from the CT State Library has made it possible to upgrade internal networks and Wi-Fi access. Enhancements to the meeting room including audio and visual capabilities have been added, making it ideal for remote programs and meetings.

Proposed Budget 2026/2027: The proposal shows a 21% increase in revenue. Town Grant was flat last year, but can not remain the same this coming year with utilities, insurance and maintenance costs rising. Expenses also show a 21% increase with the proposal of a full time position.

Revenue:

Town Grant Request	\$208,241	\$245,938	18% increase
Donations and Grants	\$52,000	\$70,000	35% increase
Fundraising Events	\$91,000	\$120,000	31% increase
Membership	\$38,000	\$40,000	4% increase
Investment Income	\$40,000	\$69,500	25% increase

Expenses:

Accounting	\$9,000	\$10,000	11% increase
------------	---------	----------	--------------

Administration	\$10,000	\$11,000	10% increase
Book-Children	\$6,000	\$6,500	8% increase
Fundraising/Comm Outreach	\$29,519	\$32,365	9% increase
Heat & Electricity	\$27,000	\$32,000	19% increase
Insurance	\$14,500	\$16,500	14% increase
Maintenance	\$38,500	\$48,334	26% increase
Payroll/Benefits Expenses	\$246,506	\$317,223	29% increase
Supplies-Equip	\$6,500	\$7,000	8% increase
Technology	\$37,650	\$39,650	5% increase
Telephone	\$3,000	\$3,500	16% increase

First Selectman Don Lowe inquired on Investment Income increase and Investment Income - Stock Sale lines of the proposal.

Jeff Matusow explained the endowment of \$1.3 million and the strategy of his investing.

First Selectman Don Lowe asked if the new full-time position will be helping with fundraising.

Ashleigh Blake clarified that the new position tasks will include day to day operations, policy work, overseeing staff, maintenance and tech. Ms. Blake will continue to focus on fundraising, acquiring grants, increasing endowments and gifts, memberships, annual reports, programming, community relations and engagement.

Business Manager Liz LaVia inquired as to where they would be broadening their fundraising efforts.

Ashleigh Blake explained they are at capacity for fundraisers and doesn't wish to add more. The Library would like to expand on existing events, sponsors, endowments, legacy grants and corporate gifts.

Public Works: Public Works Supervisor, Kris Fazzino presented the Public Works budget to the Board. Mr. Fazzino noted 3 main increase requests for the operating budget, aside from the standard contractual increases. Mr. Fazzino was also looking to add an additional full time employee.

PW Education	\$1500	\$2500	\$1000 increase
PW Road Maintenance	\$325,000	\$340,000	\$15,000 increase
PW Gen. Landscaping	\$3000	\$4000	\$1000 increase

First Selectman Don Lowe inquired if an additional crew member would help keep landscaping inhouse.

PW Supervisor Kris Fazzino added that the landscapers provide specific skills that would need to be learned by PW crew members.

PW Supervisor Kris Fazzino explained his proposal for the PW Capital Plan, which includes a 5 year plan. The 2016 Skag walk behind mower needs replacing. PW would like to refurbish the SVFD retired Engine 3 into another town plow truck. This line item already exists in the PW 2025-2026 Capital Plan. The budget also includes the purchasing of a new F600 to replace F550 (truck 3). The F600 truck is capable of carrying loads without removing the sander. Ordering time for this vehicle is limited due to the towns color choice.

PW Capital Expenditure Plan:

Addition - Clearspan Building	\$250,000
2016 Skag Mower (walk behind)	\$16,000
Refurbish Engine 3 to Plow Truck	\$75,000
Replace Truck 3 (F550) with F600	\$140,000
New V Plow	\$10,500

Tree Warden: PW Supervisor Kris Fazzino requested a stipend increase of \$300 and Tree removal increase of \$1500. Fortunately, partnering with Eversource has worked well for the town, taking down many concerning trees, but there will always be more. The increase would be the equivalent of one extra day of work.

Stipend Increase	\$2500	\$2800	\$300 increase
Tree Removal	\$26,000	\$27,500	\$1500
increase			

Selectman Bob Ostrosky commented that this was not a deliberation and what's in the budget file made sense. There wasn't a significant increase, the capital plan was clear.

PW Supervisor Kris Fazzino continued with the larger request of an additional employee, stating that PW contributes to many buildings in Sherman. He added the libraries plowing and sanding, the school mowing and plowing, and the Senior Center's changing of light bulbs and furnace issues, and the list continues to grow.

Treasurer Andrea Maloney asked for clarification regarding part time and full time.

PW Supervisor Kris Fazzone explained that he would like to phase out the part time employee (3 days a week year round) and add a regular full time position. That particular employee is not looking for full time work. Additionally, he would like to have someone two days a week during the Summer months specifically mowing all day.

Selectman Joel Bruzinski inquired if maybe the demographics of the staff changes and not adding an employee. Maybe hiring a few younger employees that are hungry for OT. Treasurer Andrea Maloney questioned why the winter maintenance line didn't increase.

Business Manager Liz LaVia explained that the line has been exceeded this winter and its still not complete. An additional \$10,000 could still be added to that line with loads of salt and sand coming (3 loads ordered), and plow blades. She noted that in the past \$35,000 has been enough, but this has been an extraordinary and unpredictable winter.

First Selectman Don Lowe inquired about the 31 miles of road work and are they scheduled for this coming year.

PW Supervisor Kris Fazzone explained that that was just a list of the work that will need to be done eventually. There was a rating system included on the spreadsheet and the remaining budget in that line would most likely be chip sealing

Planning and Zoning: Chris DaCunha explained the overall budget was pretty static with the exception of legal council for some upcoming litigations which increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000. They may need to lean heavily on legal counsel, but believe the number is fair and realistic. Dave Febbraio noted that there was a small decrease in the education line due to the ZEO being shared and trained at a different location.

Business Manager Liz LaVia asked about the current arrangement with the ZEO and were his hours working out for that office.

Chris DaCunha hasn't heard any complaints from our citizens and the Commission feels he's doing a great job in completing all his tasks and making himself available whether he's scheduled or not.

Treasurer Andrea Maloney questioned the revenue side there fees and the last time they were increased.

Dave Febbraio and Chris DaCunha will look into it. They have also been looking into home digital and cutting down on the amount of paperwork.

SVFD: Chris Fuchs presented the fire department budget. Their operating budget remains flat at \$185,645 due to cuts and absorbing a request for \$2000. That amount will be used for two new members. They have offered an incentive that has been working out well where normally they would get a tax exemption, but can't do that. They budget for that from the operating budget and then compensate the town for their taxes or send them a check. EMS staffing line increased to \$156,000. This coming fiscal year they are asking for \$250,000. The reason for that large increase is that they noticed we were having a very tough time filling nights and weekend shifts. In the current fiscal year, the EMS schedule compensated members \$5.00 an hour for nights and \$20.00 an hour during daytime. The incentive has now been increased to \$20 around the clock for nights and weekends. This was started at the end of November and Chief Fuchs added that every shift nights and weekends has been filled. Noting a drastic improvement covering our shifts and covering our calls on weekdays. They continuing to rely on Public Works, Chris and Jim, to cover weekday calls. That covers 2 EMT at \$20.00 an hour around the clock and 1 fire officer per night at \$5.00 an hour.

The capital plan for the next 10 years, no major vehicle replacements until our next engine. They've done such a good job building quality, well built fire trucks that instead of 30 years, they went over the 40 years out of one vehicle. This next fiscal year, they will continue with replacing 12 portable radios at \$130,000 for the whole project, town's portion being \$104,000 and the department should be 20% and then tires for engine 5 at \$6000. Chief Fuchs will continue doing 12 portals a year until all are replaced. They will continue to fundraise to upgrade equipment. Recently they replaced all the lights within the Firehouse without coming to the town.

Business Manager Liz LaVia noted the increased hours that are needed for the Fire Marshall with the school and with the Senior Center.

Business Manager Liz LaVia continued line by line though the remaining So long with that all Resident Trooper up \$12,000 due the fringe rate went up from 37.24% to 45.37% with 2 1/2 percent increase to the trooper. There is a nominal amount of overtime built into that, but we keep it in there because we do use it.

The Commission's are all funding their clerks. The economic development line: Conservation Commission looking for \$1180, Commission on Aging \$500 and Arts Commission \$2,350. All are looking for funding for a variety of community outreach programs.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky clarified that the Arts Commission was requesting \$900 for their clerk and no request for an increase. Mrs. LaVia confirmed that was true.

Business Manager continued: Commission on Aging, town Expo \$200 and a groundbreaking ceremony for the Senior Center \$300. The Conservation Commission: Educational seminars, dues and subscriptions \$300 and then program and project expenses, publications, newspaper ads, and outreach \$880. Arts Commission: \$400.00 cultural events, publicity, Memorial Day Weekend, \$200 book sale, Historical Society barn sale and art supply tag sale and \$200 for December holidays. All of the economic development lines, the ask is \$4030, which is up to \$2430 from last year. \$1000 of this year's budget has already been spent.

The Tax Collector showed nominal increases in the supply and the dues line. The Assessors are fairly direct, except for the re-val line for 2028. AI will not be around for the next re-val. The schedule for the re-val, shouldn't deviate from that and next year if it can be cut in half, then that's great.

Marty, the probate judge, their budget's going to be flat.

Business Manager Liz LaVia continued with the IT line. Everything was flat except the contract software and fees, due to Rich and waiting for what he's going to bill for monthly. Prior to the mail 365 conversion, it was nominal. Now, the town pays per mailbox. Based on an average, but worst case \$8500 increase to that line.

Paramedics don't have a number.

The debt servicing didn't anticipate having that extra interest payment in this coming year. They are going to have one in August. This current year, the town budgeted for \$810,000 based on estimates from Barry. The actual numbers were around \$394,000 with a surplus of approximately \$400,000 in the budget debt line.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky moved to close the meeting.

Adjournment:

Motioned By: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Seconded: Selectman Joel Bruzinski