

# Selectman's Report

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Timothy C. Griswold  
*First Selectman*

The theme for this year's Annual Report, "Look at Us Now," focuses on the newly renovated school buildings and the sports fields at the Town Woods Park. The school buildings are discussed in the District 18 report. The opening of the three soccer/lacrosse fields (Phase I of the project) on September 19 was the culmination of years of hard work by many people.

The discussion of a sports facility began in the mid 1990s and nearly became a dead issue when a \$2.6 million, Old Lyme-only proposal was defeated at referendum in 2000. Undeterred, some determined citizens pushed ahead with a plan that reduced the scope of the project and made it a joint venture (75 percent/25 percent) with the Town of Lyme. A groundbreaking occurred in June of 2003 and Machnik Brothers essentially completed the fields in November of 2003. With the help of the irrigation system, the grass grew well during 2004 and the job was completed for \$131,000 less than the \$1.4 million budget. The two towns were awarded state grants totaling \$950,000. Because Phase I did not include a recreation building containing washrooms, a concession area, and storage, in May of 2004 the voters of the two towns approved an expenditure of \$315,000 to fund this construction. Phase II of the project will consist of two baseball/softball fields and will be considered at a later date. The keys to success were the cooperation between the two towns and the dedicated volunteers who made it happen.

At the Annual Town Meeting in January, the Board of Selectmen announced that Connie Kastelowitz was selected Citizen of the Year for 2003. First elected to the Planning Commission in 1992, Connie is in her fourteenth year of service. She co-authored the town's *2000 Plan of Conservation and Development* and chaired the committee charged with developing the town's first Open Space Plan. She continues to serve on the Open Space Committee, which has had outstanding success in preserving Old Lyme's character. Connie has volunteered for the American Red Cross Blood program for more than 50 years and has donated over 100

pints herself. She is active with the American Cancer Society and High Hopes Therapeutic Riding. Her lengthy service to Yale-New Haven Hospital includes the creation of the Adolph & Constance Kastelowitz Fund and the Connie Kastelowitz Scholarship Fund. Connie has been a guiding hand in the development of our community and

A Special Town Meeting in November 2003 approved the town's purchase of seventy acres of property owned by Steven Ames located off Whippoorwill Road for the sum of \$700,000. The town's Land Acquisition account provided \$150,000 of this, and \$550,000 came from the town's undesignated surplus account. In addition, another thirty-six acres of Ames property was transferred to an irrevocable trust, the sole beneficiary of which will be the Town of Old Lyme upon the death of Mr. Ames. These thirty-six acres are subject to a conservation easement, and Mr. Ames will have exclusive use of the property during his lifetime. The Old Lyme Conservation Trust contributed \$25,000 toward the purchase and those funds were deposited into the Land Acquisition Account. This is an important addition to the open space green belt in the central part of town

After several years of working with the state, the MacCurdy Salisbury Foundation sold its parcel of over 180 acres in Lyme and Old Lyme near Rogers Lake to the state for \$620,000, subject to a conservation easement. The towns of Lyme and Old Lyme each contributed \$25,000, so the foundation received \$670,000, the earnings from which will fund scholarships for District 18 graduates.

Voters approved the purchase of the Roche property at 47 Lyme Street in February 2003 in an effort to give the school time to decide whether it could use the property or not. The town's Roche Property Committee concluded the property was not well suited for the town and recommended the sale of the property. In December of 2003, the Board of Education established a committee to work on this, with a deadline of March 31. After four months' study, the committee recommended and the BOE voted 5-4 to purchase the property, even though

## Selectman's Report *(continued)*

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there was no identified purpose for the property. The voters of Old Lyme were asked to decide the disposition of the property at a Special Town Meeting on June 28. The first question was whether to sell the property to District 18 at a price of \$381,000. The voters opposed this option and voted to sell the property to the open market at a minimum price of \$400,000. It has subsequently been sold at that price to a family that intends to remodel and live in the house.

The reconstruction of Lyme Street will begin in November and, depending on the weather, may be completed before year's end. The cost estimate of the entire project is \$940,000 and consists of engineering costs, drainage improvements, installing new granite curbing, upgrading sidewalks and driveway aprons, and replacing the pavement from the firehouse to the parsonage. The expenditure was approved at a Special Town Meeting on April 19. We are eligible for a State/Federal grant of \$438,000 and we have accumulated the rest from prior budget years.

Selectman Tom Bice submitted his resignation to the Board of Selectmen at the end of July 2003. Skip Sibley and I appointed Robert Sevieri to serve the remainder of his term. As a result of the municipal election held on November 4, Skip Sibley and I were re-elected to the Board of Selectmen and were joined by Bonnie Reemsnyder.

Selectman Skip Sibley is the Board of Selectmen's liaison to the Sound View Development District Committee. This committee has been working with the Zoning Commission to create special zoning regulations for the Hartford Avenue area encouraging property owners and investors to upgrade properties. There has already been a significant number of property transfers and renovations, but we believe the new Design District will stimulate future improvements. The Sound View Parking Committee has implemented new changes, such as restriping Hartford Ave., adding new signage, and arranging for a towing service to tow delinquent parked cars. As a result, the vehicle problems have decreased.

Selectman Reemsnyder is the Board of Selectmen's liaison to the Information Technology Committee, which is charged with establishing a new town web site, evaluating

and implementing a Geographic Information System (GIS) for the town hall, and upgrading the town's financial software system. The web site will be operational in November 2004 and we hope to see implementation of GIS and new financial software in fiscal year 2005.

The town landfill has only about two years of capacity left before it must be closed. We have hired an engineering firm to help with the closure plan. It will be necessary to construct a transfer station and a scale in addition to other improvements. When the landfill is closed, probably in the fall of 2005, residents will deposit their bulky waste items into roll-off containers and will be charged by the pound. There will still be no charge to dispose of most recycled items.

The Regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection Center in Essex opened in May 2004 and it will provide us with twelve collections between May 22 and October 30. We scheduled a satellite collection for Lyme and Old Lyme on September 11.

The town budget passed at the Annual Budget Meeting in May. The growth in the grand list was 0.5 percent and the mill rate increased 1.9 mills or 8 percent from 23.6 to 25.5. Property and motor vehicle taxes account for 89 percent of our revenues, while state aid accounts for 3.7 percent. On the expense side, the school district is 75 percent of the budget and the town is 25 percent. A major part of the school increase is the debt service associated with the \$34 million building program. The assessor's office will be calculating new revaluation figures next year in compliance with the state's four-year revaluation cycle. The town underwent a physical revaluation (when revaluation personnel physically inspected all of our houses) in 2000 and we will have two statistical revaluations (no physical inspections) in 2004 and 2008. Revaluation notices will be sent in November of 2004.

The Old Lyme Fire Department took delivery of its new pumper in March; we thank the apparatus committee for a job well done. The department was awarded a \$104,422 Federal grant for communication equipment. Thanks to Jon Mittleman for completing the application and to Congressman Simmons in helping secure approval. We have funded the

# Selectman's Report *(continued)*

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new Emergency Services Incentive Plan, which rewards active ambulance and fire volunteers for their service. This plan replaced the old MONY plan and was funded with the proceeds from our lawsuit settlement and with annual budget appropriations. We are confident the new plan and the tax abatement will keep our volunteer spirit alive and well.

We met with our engineering consultant and a representative from the DEP to discuss what must be done to repair the dam near Town Woods Road. While the dam is safe, we believe the slide gate assembly needs to be replaced. We were told there should be state funding (about 35 percent of cost), so we now need to determine the scope and cost of the repairs. At the Town Forum held in August, Alan Kyle, former Chairman of the Rogers Lake Authority, commented on the Rogers Lake Weed Study. He said the quality of the water in the lake is very good. Options to deal with the weeds were reviewed and, while a chemical solution appears to be the best, no decision has been made.

In anticipation of installing a sidewalk on the north side of Halls Road from the Art Association to the former Bess Eaton Donut Shop, we have moved the guard rails and will add a paved sidewalk in the fall. The consulting firm of Clough, Harbour & Assoc. has completed a feasibility study of adding a third lane to I-95. A copy is available in Town Hall, which shows the proposed changes to the interchanges in Old Lyme. It is estimated the project will be completed in twelve years.

A Church Corner Committee has been formed to consider options on improving the

streets, parking, and sidewalks in the vicinity of the Congregational Church. The Committee has two members from the Historic District Commission and each of the two churches. The committee's draft plan will be presented to the Historic District Commission and then to the public. We will have the plans finalized and the cost estimated by next summer, then apply for grants and schedule the work as part of our five-year capital plan.

A Town Hall Facilities Committee has been formed to consider options for dealing with space constraints in the town hall. We have engaged Laura Champion of Gible, Norden, Champion and Brown of Old Saybrook to help us through the process. We believe we have three options: renovate the lower level of the town hall and bring the building into fire- and ADA-code compliance, construct a new code-compliant addition to the town hall and upgrade the building as needed, or sell the town hall and build a new facility on a larger parcel elsewhere in Old Lyme. These are long-range options but we must examine the pros and cons of each in the near term.

The lower Connecticut River pumpout boat was very successful during the 2003 boating season. About 1,000 boats were pumped out at no charge to the owners, representing about 22,000 gallons of waste. Due to in-kind contributions, the five participating towns incurred no expense to operate the boat. Activity for the 2004 season is off to a good start. We are hopeful that we may obtain grants to fund 100 percent of the purchase of a new pumpout boat to be operated next season.



*Old Saybrook Rotary President Peter Knox presents Tim Griswold with \$1,000 for goals at Town Woods Park. (Photo courtesy of Olwen Logan, LymeLine)*



*The new seminar room in the high school has great acoustics for the chorus as well as for anyone holding a meeting here.*