



**RAISED BILL 6397
AN ACT CONCERNING OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION**

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you this morning. My name is Ralph Eno. I'm First Selectman in the town of Lyme and I'm here to testify in favor of Raised Bill No. 6397, AN ACT CONCERNING OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION.

As, I understand it, the proposed measure is a local option statute. This is a key feature as it allows towns to decide whether they choose to utilize such an option as part of their open space acquisition strategic planning.

The Town of Lyme has had an Open Space Reserve Account for a number of years now. It is funded exclusively with property tax dollars. When our economy is subject to recessionary pressure and municipal budgets are stressed, reserve fund line items are usually the first to be cut. They represent one of the few discretionary, big ticket elements in local budgets that can be easily trimmed.

Having a reliable, alternative revenue stream flowing directly into a dedicated open space reserve account would go a long way toward mitigating the impact economic down turns have on municipal strategies to fund open space acquisition. Further, as the availability of state bonding funds to offset municipal costs for open space purchases continues to diminish, the concept of a local option conveyance tax for such purposes has additional appeal.

Raised Bill 6397 also compliments the state's commitment to facilitate Smart Growth initiatives. By providing Connecticut's cities and towns with a proven vehicle with which to bolster open space acquisition funding, communities will be better able to control development pressures and channel them to locations producing the greatest benefit.

Lyme has a long history of supporting this type of legislation and continues to do so. I would respectfully recommend that the bill be amended to allow funds from the dedicated account to be used for affordable housing endeavors as well. If memory serves, previous bills of a similar nature contained this provision and it would strengthen 6397 to do so again.

I would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have and thank you all again for this opportunity to testify.