

Devin Berke Seeks Region 18 School Board Seat in Upcoming October 6th Special Election

Candidate's experience with budgets and long-range planning fits the board's core responsibilities



DEVIN BERKE

LYME-OLD LYME BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday,
October 6th

6:00pm

LOLMS
Auditorium



An accountant's view of the budget

Berke said his years in accounting have shaped how he reads a school budget. "A budget is a statement of values," he said, and he wants the district's spending directed first to the classroom.

He plans to advocate for a healthy undesignated fund, the reserve that protects the district from unexpected costs without sudden tax increases or program cuts. He also wants the board to rely on multi-year forecasting "so that decisions made today don't become burdens tomorrow."

A project manager's view of the buildings

Berke's work in project management and construction informs his second priority: long-term facilities planning. Roofs, heating systems and technology all have predictable lifespans, he said, and the district should budget for their replacement before they fail. "The most expensive repair is the one nobody planned for," Berke said. If elected, he intends to work with the board's Facilities and Finance Committee to develop a five-year capital improvement plan and then extend it toward a ten-year horizon.

Berke has also taken part in union negotiations and has worked alongside both union and non-union employees. "Good outcomes come from a balanced approach that respects the people doing the work and the taxpayers who fund it," he said.

Technology in the classroom

Berke's third priority is clear district policy on artificial intelligence and screen time. Used well, he said, these tools create real opportunities and prepare students for a workforce where they will matter. Without clear guidelines, they can affect students' focus, sleep and well-being and raise online safety concerns.

He wants those policies shaped with input from the parents and teachers "who see the impact every day."

OLD LYME — When Devin Berke looks at a school district, he sees a budget that has to hold up for years, not just one, and a set of buildings whose roofs and boilers will wear out on a schedule that can be predicted. He says that is exactly the perspective he wants to bring to the Region 18 Board of Education.

Berke, who has spent six years in accounting and has a background in project management and construction, is a candidate in the special election for the Lyme-Old Lyme Board of Education on Tuesday, Oct. 6. Voting will take place at Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School.

That background speaks directly to some of the board's most consequential work. Board members review and approve the district's annual budget, decide how much it keeps in reserve, and oversee the maintenance and replacement of school buildings and equipment. Financial management and project planning are critical skills for the job, and they are the two areas where Berke has spent his career.

"Every family in Lyme and Old Lyme wants the same thing from our schools: a safe place where children learn, grow and leave ready for what comes next," Berke said. "Good intentions alone won't get us there. It takes careful planning, responsible use of taxpayer dollars and a willingness to face new challenges directly."

He also said technology spending should deliver real value, that every vendor agreement should protect student data, and that the district can partner with families by sharing resources on healthy technology habits at home.

I'm Looking ahead

Berke described his approach to the board as collaborative. "None of this is work one person does alone," he said. "The best decisions for our schools happen when parents, teachers, staff and taxpayers sit at the same table and plan together."

"The choices we make now will shape our schools for years to come," he said. "Let's make them together, so the schools we pass on to the next generation are even stronger than the ones we have today."

Voters in Old Lyme will cast ballots in the special election on Tuesday, Oct. 6, at Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School. 🦏

Old Lyme Zoning Commission Launches Phase 2 of Regulation Update

The Town of Old Lyme is moving into the next stage of a major overhaul and updating of its zoning regulations. Phase 1 wrapped up with the adoption of updated regulations that took effect on April 1, 2026, resolving conflicts with state law, and improving clarity for residents, applicants, and staff alike. Streamlining the overall document from 292 to 217 pages also greatly improved clarity and usability.

Now the Zoning Commission is turning its attention to Phase 2, a closer look at the rules that determine what can be built, where, and how projects get approved. Over the coming year, the Commission will examine potential changes to building size and placement, allowed uses, site design, and standards for sustainability and resilience. Just as important, this phase is built around listening: community meetings, workshops, and other engagement opportunities will help shape the recommendations that follow. The target for adopting updated regulations is March 2027.

Eric Knapp, the Town's Land Use Coordinator, is leading the effort, with the firm IMEG hired to guide the technical work and draft proposed changes. A Process Subcommittee has also been formed to help oversee community engagement and keep the process transparent.

Public input will be gathered through several channels. [A dedicated project webpage](#) will post workshop announce-

First Selectwoman's Corner

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ments and all written comments within three business days of receipt. A townwide survey launched in May drew more than 800 responses to date , and will close on September 30. Three in-person community workshops, each about two hours long, covered specific topics: environmental issues in June, residential issues in July, and commercial issues in September. Focus groups organized around those same three themes and also brought together town boards, commissions, and regional stakeholders for deeper discussion.

Phase 2 will conclude with a formal public hearing, opening with a summary presentation from IMEG on the proposed regulation changes, followed by opportunities for residents to weigh in — both in person and in writing. The Commission plans to hold at least two hearing sessions before finalizing the update.

Residents interested in following along or submitting comments can visit the Zoning Regulations Rewrite page on the Town's website.

Task	April '26	May '26	June '26	July '26	Aug '26	Sept '26	Oct '26	Nov '26	Dec '26	Jan '27	Feb '27	March '27
Webpage												
Online Survey												
Community Workshops												
Focus Groups												
Update Summary												
Public Hearing												

A View From [Tom's] Porch

CLICK HERE FOR TOM GOTAWKA'S LATEST PIECE IN LYME LINE!



**Due to this vacancy being an Old Lyme seat,
only Old Lyme residents are permitted to vote.**

Special Town Meeting!!

Tuesday, Oct. 6th



*Devin
Burke*

**LYME-OLD LYME
BOARD OF EDUCATION**



**Please
show up
and vote!**

6:00pm

LOLMS Auditorium

**Join the OL DTC email
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information on special
events, fundraisers, calls to
action, the Democratic
Dispatch, and more!**



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