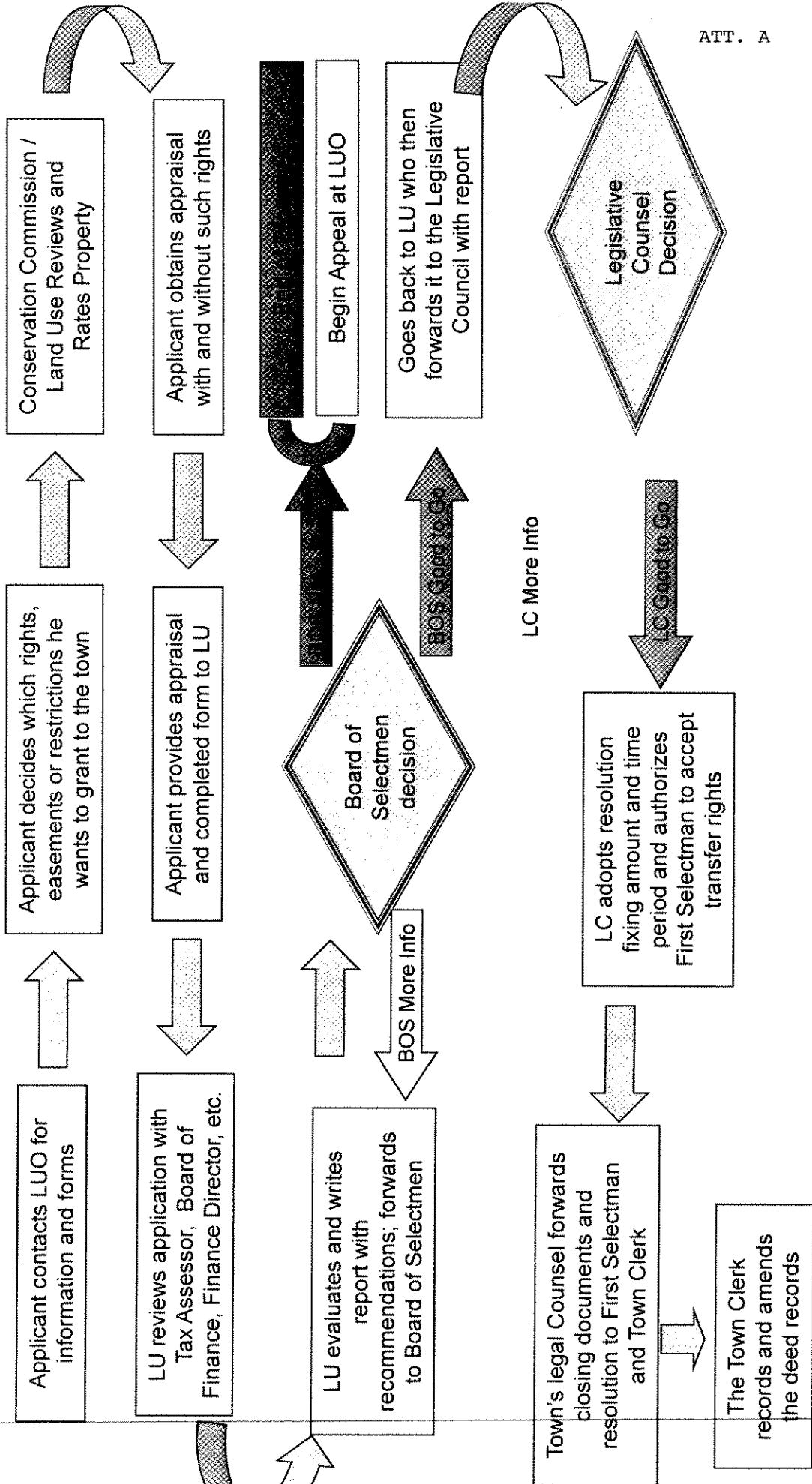


Town of Newtown - Draft Process - Proposed Ordinance on Tax Abatement for Transfer of Certain Rights, 6-11-09



Mr. John Kortse  
Newtown Board of Finance

Sept. 4, 2009

Dear Mr. Kortse,

This is not meant as a criticism as much as an education regarding public education.

While I do not agree with Po Murray and find her disingenuous and a hypocrite who pretends to care about education but only cares about spending more \$\$ for everything.... I also do not agree with your statement that our School Superintendent 'knows best' regarding education just because she is Superintendent of Schools. You could say she should know best.... but her actions to date do not show me anything positive.

Personally, I think most parents know best regarding their own children's needs and their education and most of the time the parents know far more than some Superintendents do

John, we have five grown daughters. The oldest two have three degrees each. One is a Nurse Practitioner; the other is a CPA with a MBA in Finance. Two more have just finished university. The youngest is a senior in university as an Accounting major with a 3.8 GPA. Two of these kids were born prematurely at 26 weeks and when they went to school at age six, (because of their premature birth they were identified as handicapped). Today a child would have to be assessed professionally; back then that was not the case. Next the teachers in Special-Ed then spent a lot of time telling us what the kids were deficient in but not much time telling us what they were teaching them.

I remember thinking... if they spent half the time teaching them instead of meeting with us they certainly would learn more. But our twins always came home with B's so we mistakenly did not notice how much they did not know until fourth grade.

My complaint is that despite the supposed knowledge of educators, our children and others in 4<sup>th</sup> grade did not know the multiplication tables or how to read and write well. (That is probably because they were never taught the multiplication tables in the Special-Ed classes). While teachers were encouraged to be creative in all kinds of ways the curriculum did not require students to know specific areas at specific points in time, such as the multiplication tables by the end of fourth grade. This occurred in Brookfield and ultimately resulted in our move to Newtown.

In fact at that time Brookfield's assistant superintendent told me my problem was "I was a over achiever and that these two would never be doctors".

... When this came to our attention I asked to have them taken out of Special-Education classes and put into the mainstream, which Brookfield's Superintendent refused to do. So my wife and I pulled them out of public school entirely and put them into private school

through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In Ninth Grade we moved to Newtown and put them in Newtown High school, by this time they caught up with most kids. They took mostly college prep and honor courses and even two AP courses each, in English and History, and graduated with honors. This was mostly due to my wife and I helping them nightly with about 3 hrs of homework from fourth grade through ninth grade after which they were able to do it all on their own.

One of these two recently graduated from university with a double major in Advertising and Public Relations and also a double minor in Journalism and Business with Honors. The other daughter is a senior at University and her major is Registered Dietetics.

These kids achieved because Mom and Dad valued education and pushed, not because a superintendent had a magic formula. The magic formula was actually imparted to me by my parents who also valued education. My Mother was a WWII Army Nurse, becoming a Nurse Anesthesiologist at age 53. And my Father flew B24's during WWII and was a mine foreman for U.S. Steel. They said "get a good education and work hard if you expect to participate in the American dream". Unfortunately this message is not understood by many today. Nor is our BOE imparting this message to parents and students alike. Some how our BOE mistakenly thinks money alone is the magic answer.

Nationally we quadrupled spending per pupil since the 1960's but school results are not as good as the early 1960's. But hey, they have a 'palace' to teach in. Since when did bricks and mortar ever impart knowledge? Locally we have an estimated (Newtown Bee article that says drug use at the high school is approximately 47%). I feel that Superintendent Robinson has not addressed this drug problem in a significant way to change the situation therefore she fails to impress me because those 47% have too much negative influence on the other children. Nor do I see real efforts to improve academic results.

Our BOE seems to be all about their egos and the \$36 million school addition when a \$25 million addition would have better served the communities affordability. The BOE is also out of touch with the depression in our country in comparison to the benefits and perks they recently provided our school administration, instead of being focused on improving real academic results. For example: I do not see them polling graduates who go off to college two years after graduation and asking: "**In what areas do they think the school best prepared them for college and life**"? Nor do they ask: "**In what areas do they feel they the school fell short of preparing them for college level work**"? While we do nothing like this, many other schools do. **The point, if they do not know where the problems are, how can they improve results?**

While I had faith in Dr. Reed and most of our teachers, I can not say the same of our school administration and our BOE at this point in time.

**A school system that does not teach American History, require four years of math through at least Trigonometry and four years of science and of English to graduate... does not show me much.** Note our schools also have done away with class rank. But college

admissions officers know that class rank is the best predictor of college success. They know that 90 % students who are in the top 25% of their class will successfully graduate from college.

I've also enclosed an article titled: " iPhones Have Consequences, by Sally Thomas. You might find this both informative and interesting. It will also lead you to ask:" Why are cell phones not banned from use during school? "

Parents are not adjunct to the school system, it is supposed to be the other way around the school system is adjunct to parents, after all we pay their salaries.

John, We have raised these five who are great adults. My personal teaching experience includes teaching over 550 students from solo through the Airline Transport Pilot level. I Also served on Liberty University's Board of Regents from 2005 -2008.

Sincerely,

Daniel Kormanik

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ATT. C  
JOSEPH E. BORST  
FIRST SELECTMAN

## TOWN OF NEWTOWN

OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

### **TICK BORNE DISEASES ACTION COMMITTEE CHARGE**

**GOAL:** To develop and implement a Town Wide Action Plan to control, reduce and/or eradicate the diseases carried by ticks which infect humans.

In order to accomplish such a plan the following tasks must be accomplished:

- 1.) Complete a review of all existing technical and medical data to develop a personal health procedure to be disseminated to the public.
- 2.) Complete a review of all available Newtown health data to determine if there are areas of concentration of tick transmitted diseases in the community. Detail the results, if any, on a map of Newtown to show the relationship, if any, between population areas, open space and/or forested areas.
- 3.) Complete a review of data developed by neighboring towns in their effort to reduce or eradicate tick borne diseases. Would any of the procedures be applicable to Newtown's problem? Gather and review documentation for the limits and extent of deer impact to Newtown's public health and safety, natural resources and economic growth.
- 4.) Taking into consideration all of the above findings develop a definitive action plan for the prevention and control of tick borne diseases in Newtown.
- 5.) This plan must be approved by a majority vote of the committee prior to submittal to the Board of Selectmen for possible formal action.

### **Board of Finance questions regarding the 2009-2010 Capital Improvement Plan:**

**HVAC: Is there any merit in looking into the "total" boiler issue with all the schools as an economy of scale?** We believe, at this point, that is an important option to be explored. By next year's CIP, we hope to have completed a study of the cost benefits of doing like projects at the same time.

**Status of the Church Hill Road house:** The Board of Selectmen turned down the \$400,000 offer as too high. Joe Borst informed me that there are continued conversations about it, and another party is now interested in buying the property.

#### **Hawley:**

1. **Total equipment cost and installation estimate:** The bid that was received in 2005 was greater than estimates in the CIP. Because the bids came in over the projected amount, the project was postponed. Since that time the project has been carried on in the CIP with an inflation factor each year.
2. **Can this work be performed separately?** Parts of this project can be separated out such as doing the wing of the school closest to the busy road. Of particular concern is replacing the boiler and that can be done as a stand alone project.
3. **Has the BOE considered issuing a RFP for a design?** A bid was done in 2005 and an RFP would be issued at the time that the project is ready to begin. Estimates done now may not be valid when this project comes up.
4. **Are they pursuing "break up" of project as Janet suggested.** Yes, but there was not enough time to redo this project for this year's CIP. Our committee needs to propose alternatives to doing this project as one large expense. For example, it may come back to the Board of Finance as a boiler and a single wing project with plans for other work later. We believe that this project lends itself to phases.
5. **Proposed A & E and Manager of 4% on this project. Reconcile with other projects.** An engineering company did this estimate. Estimates will vary with the complexity of the project and the source. Actuals will be determined when bid.

#### **Middle School Expansion:**

1. **The third phase of the project proposes to spend \$18M on construction. How many additional square feet will be added?** Since this project is 5 years out, there is time to reconsider the design alternatives which are 3 years old. It is not an issue of adding space as much as the usefulness of the current space. The need is for a renovation of the media center, an upgrade of the server, and upgrade of the science labs. We are having a study done of the possibility of water in the structure of one wing of that building to check the integrity of the structure.
2. **The project estimate currently indicates that there will be no additional operating costs. Why?** At this time, there is no anticipation of additional operating costs as no space is being added. Some work may even increase energy efficiency.

### **High School Auditorium:**

- 1. Why must all seats, regardless of condition, need to be replaced?** A large number of the chairs are broken. If the auditorium is to be aesthetically pleasing to audiences, there needs to be a coordinated repair. The possibility of repairing rather than replacing needs to be studied. Unfortunately, parts of rows have been removed as they were too dangerous, so those sections would need some matching seats.
- 2. What exactly is wrong with the duct work currently in place: What specific problems does it cause?** The duct work is disconnected at the joints and flattened so no air is flowing.
- 3. This project to replace the ductwork includes replacing ceiling, lights, diffusers, sprinklers, seats and carpets. Provide an estimate of the cost of the work for each component. Also, what is the connection w/seats and carpets to ductwork that necessitates one project vs. two?** This project could be done in phases but since the auditorium is used daily for instruction to close it down twice presents more logistics issues for the school. Cost estimates by component can be done, as we get closer to project.
- 4. Consider moving to this current period of construction:** This was in the original educational specs but was removed during cost cutting.

### **Middle School Sloped Roof:**

- 1. Please provide budget and copies of any underlying drawings, spec or plans.** Once the project is approved, an engineering study will be done and then the project will be bid which will provide the budget and specs.
- 2. How much are "General Conditions"?** Need clarification of term.
- 3. Was a second possible bidder considered; if so, who and with what result?** This project has not yet been bid. The estimates with which we are working were provided by the architectural firm of Fletcher-Thompson.
- 4. Will the contract be guaranteed maximum price with both time and dollar penalties?** This will not be known until the bid process, but the bid defines the maximum price and the time is dependent on the weather as this is an outside project.
- 5. Have they considered installing the air conditioners (if on this part of roof) from Item 9 at this time intact?** There is no equipment on this roof.
- 6. A & E of 10% seems high for this project.** No disagreement here. This is a negotiating point.

### **Middle School Flat Roof:**

- 1. Same as above.** The difference with this roof is that it must be engineered for  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch slant.
- 2. A & E and Manager are 9% for this project and 15% for sloped roof. Why?** These will be negotiated but this project is more complicated than the sloped roof.
- 3. Provide estimate of annual maintenance and repair savings as indicated in Purpose & Justification.** Last year the district spent \$23,573 on repair, notwithstanding the personnel time and loss of instructional time when some classes had to be moved.