



LITTLE COMPTON TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

● ● NEWSLETTER ● ●

PO Box 455, Adamsville, RI 02801

E-Mail: Taxpayers@cox.net

*Chairman: Bob Hayden
Vice Chairman: Roy Bonner
Secretary: George Crowell
Treasurer: Roger Lord
Research Analyst: Roger Lord*

October 25, 2004, Vol. VII, No. 5

* * Election Newsletter * *

The townspeople of Little Compton appear to have divided into two distinct camps, those who are against double digit tax increases and those who believe that the town can never spend enough on education and services. The "wish list" approach to departmental budget requests has brought initial departmental requests which would require approximately 17% tax increases for two years in a row. The LCTA believes that \$11,300 per student is enough to educate our children, also \$960 per student to transport them is far too much. The Budget Committee and most of the Town Council have attempted to respect the 5.5% mandatory tax cap law. There are some candidates running for public office in Little Compton who do not believe we spend enough or think it necessary to respect the 5.5% tax cap law. The LCTA believes that an expanding property tax base, together with enhanced revenue streams, such as the third party billing for ambulance runs and future cell tower revenues should be enough to operate the town without double digit tax increases.

Many people have asked the LCTA for some guidance in the upcoming November 2nd election process. The LCTA directors have discussed this at length and offer the following appraisal.

Treasurer

You all probably know Mary Jane Harrington (D) from your visits to the Treasurer's office at the town hall. Mrs. Harrington served as assistant to the town Treasurer for five years. This past year, when our elected Treasurer, Fran Matta, resigned, Mary Jane, having the required experience, was appointed Treasurer by the Town Council. By all accounts and from our experience, she has done a superb job. For example, she has cut delinquent taxes 57% in her first three months. She has also made other changes to

save the town money and to expedite the work in the Treasurer's office.

The Treasurer's position is not one for a person to step into without the experience and understanding of the many details necessary to run the office. This is no place for on the job training for the person in charge of the office. Of the two candidates, our position is to support the election of Mary Jane Harrington to the office of Treasurer.

Moderator

Dr. Joseph Hagen (R) is a well known resident of Little Compton who has a long list of accomplishments. He is chairman of the Zoning Board, former chairman of the Budget Committee and is an experienced parliamentarian. He will bring order to our Financial Town Meeting, in contrast to the procedural deviations evident at last year's Financial Town Meeting.. Our position is to support the election of "Dr. Joe" Hagen as moderator.

Town Council

The LCTA supports the five Republican candidates for the Town Council. Their initiatives of availability, sound business practices, enhanced revenue streams, improved management of the town pension fund, and improving long range planning are all reasons to support the candidacy of Donald Gomez, Paul Golumbeske, Gary Mataronas, Bob Mushen, and Ted Boddington.

School Committee

Our support for the Little Compton School Committee goes to Cheryl Cady (R), who served on the School Committee from 1996 to 2000 and served on the 1995/96 Budget Committee. She is the only

candidate who we believe is for the efficient use of school funds and has shown fiscal responsibility while on the Budget Committee.

State Representative

This particular race was the most difficult for the LCTA to reach a consensus. We have two able candidates for State Representative. Michael Forte (D) has done a remarkable job as present chairman of the Budget Committee. Fiscally responsible and forward planning, he strives for greater communication between town officials and the school administration. He respects the state law requiring a 5.5% cap on tax hikes.

John Loughlin (R) is a fiscal conservative, and as a Republican, he will bolster the minority party which has been so under-represented in recent years. This year, the Republican party has a chance to make itself felt in the legislature, following the leads of Governor Carcieri and Cranston Mayor Laffey. We need enough Republican representatives to support a Governor's veto of costly special interest bills so common from the Democratic legislature.

For the sake of establishing a viable two-party system, we must support John Loughlin, while at the same time recognizing the many fine contributions of Michael Forte.

Charter Questions

On July 22, 2004, in accordance with the town Charter, the Town Council voted to place four charter questions on the November ballot. The purpose of the Charter changes is to restore order and a measure of common sense to the annual Financial Town Meeting and more importantly, to remove any uncertainty with respect to state tax cap laws. The controversy is whether to vote on the amendments or wait for a review by a charter review commission, a process that could take years.

The proposed Charter changes were well done, in the opinion of the LCTA board. The following describes the pertinent points of the changes. They appear as "LOCAL QUESTIONS" on the voting ballot.

Ballot Question #15 (Approve)

The effect of the first proposed change is to ensure that the 5.5% cap on tax increases is recognized as valid Rhode Island state law, and must be adhered to unless an emergency relief is requested of the state and granted. The LCTA supports this change.

Ballot Question #16 (Approve)

The second change reinforces the Town Council's authority to enforce the state cap by adjusting the budget so that it complies with state law. This change is strongly supported.

Ballot Question #17 (Approve)

Change number three would increase the number of days to mail the annual Report of the Budget Committee from 10 to 14. This is the least controversial change proposed and is completely necessary to an orderly budget process. We support it. It is needed to get the budget information into the hands of the taxpayers in a timely manner.

Ballot Question #18 (Reject)

The fourth change would enable a motion to be made to pass the entire budget as submitted by the Budget Committee on one vote if the electors so decide. This is allowed to be done from the floor at the present time, and indeed has been done in recent Financial Town Meetings, consequently this change is unnecessary. We do not support it.

Separation of Powers (State Question #1): The first amendment on this year's ballot is the Separation of Powers amendment. It is vital to the interests of every Rhode Island citizen to vote **APPROVE** on this amendment. The struggle has taken years, overcome numerous challenges and obstacles but we are near the finish line. We can win the race!

Simply stated we will join the rest of the states with a truly independent government of three branches. It is a vital step to overcome the years of conflict of interest violations that have so tarnished the reputation of the state and damaged the interests of the citizens. Please vote and support this amendment! There is a wealth of information on the "SOP" website: www.SOPrightNow.org

Questions They Are Afraid To Answer

The originally planned content of this newsletter was to ask the candidates for Town Council and School Committee a set of very pointed questions and publish their responses. Unfortunately, only one candidate for the Town Council and two candidates for the School Committee responded. They were Gary Mataronas, Cheryl Cady, and Paul Desilets respectively. The LCTA appreciates their candor and their willingness to tell us what they think.

The questions shown below cut to the heart of some of the problems plaguing the Town of Little Compton. Why did the other candidates not respond? If the candidates are unwilling to directly address these problems does this spell continued problems in the future resolving these very important issues?

The following questions were asked of the Town Council and School Committee candidates. The questions were designed to get straight answers (yes or no) from the candidates in order to show where they stand on certain issues without caveats, fog, obfuscation, or "nuancing" to coin a modern day phrase.

Common Questions (Council & School)

1. Would you publicly oppose any attempt for a statewide property tax to fund public education? Yes or No?
2. Do you support withholding pay raises in the next contract period to offset the excessive raises granted in the last contracts? Yes or No?
3. Will you demand that all future public employee contracts provide for 25% of the health insurance premium being paid by the employee? Yes or No?
4. Do you support giving the Taxpayers the final say on all public employee contracts by asking our State representatives for special legislation to achieve this? Yes or No?

Town Council Only Questions

1. Concerning the Town employee pension plan, do you support establishing a minimum retirement age of 57; calculating the COLA benefit in accordance with the Social Security method which is indexed to inflation with limits; and basing

retirement pay on the average last three years' wages instead of just the last year's wage? Yes or No?

2. Do you support reviving the Volunteer Fire Department for the purpose of replacing the full time employees and eliminating the high cost of benefits and overtime? Yes or No?
3. Do you support the use of technology to reduce the need for dispatchers in the police department? Yes or No?
4. Do you support removing union obstructions to permit cross training of police and fire personal? Yes or No?

School Committee Only Question

1. Do you support an analysis of unfunded mandates imposed on the School to show how these unfunded mandates impact local property taxes? Yes or No?
2. Do you support an independent analysis of the School's busing costs? Yes or No?
3. Do you support an ongoing line-by-line analysis of the School budget with quarterly reports made public? Yes or No?
4. Will you defend an open policy at the School where all budgetary and contractual information is made available to the public? Yes or No?

In our opinion, the correct answer for each of these questions is "Yes". If any of the candidates come to your door soliciting your vote, ask them these questions. If they give you an answer other than yes or no, they are dodging the question.

Although we are disappointed in the lack of responses from the candidates, we do believe that those whom we support in this newsletter are the best overall choices for the Town. This is based upon past performance as well as reputation and qualifications. Your vote counts. Please remember to cast it on November 2nd.

Little Compton Taxpayers Association
PO Box 455
Adamsville, RI 02801

Bulk Rate
US Postage
Paid
Little Compton
RI
Permit No 4

POSTAL CUSTOMER

LITTLE COMPTON TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME _____ DATE _____
(For couples, please provide both first names)

OFFICE PHONE _____ FAX _____

EMAIL _____

First Home Address → Check if year-round address

ADDRESS _____

CITY/TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE _____

Second Home Address → From _____ To _____ (Month/Day)

ADDRESS _____

CITY/TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE _____

SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTION: \$10 (Single) \$15 (Family) \$ _____ (Other)

Mail this form and your contribution to: Little Compton Taxpayers Association
PO Box 455
Adamsville, RI 02801