

# LITTLE COMPTON TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

## • • NEWSLETTER • •

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December 9, 2009 Vol. X, No. 2

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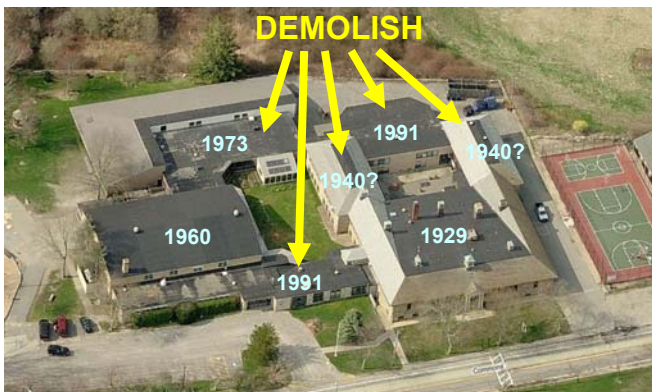
## SPECIAL EDITION - THE NEW SCHOOL EXPRESS!

This special newsletter focuses on a school project that started with **\$100,000** in fire safety repairs/upgrades and has now grown into a staggering **\$37 Million** project at a time where both the United States and Rhode Island are in the worst financial situation since the Great Depression.

**History:** Former Fire Chief Harry Hallgring conducted a long overdue fire safety inspection of the Wilbur & McMahon School in August 2005. The estimated cost for compliance was \$100,000. This price tag "shocked" the School Committee into contracting with Mount Vernon Group Architects to perform a study on what else might be wrong with the school. The study was completed in March 2006. The cost was \$11 Million. More shock! Maybe a new school should be built!

As is the case with most projects that run afoul, a study committee was formed in May 2007 - the Facilities Needs Committee. This group of 11 people was to look at the physical and educational requirements of "a school facility." But that quickly turned into "a **NEW** school facility." A new architect was hired (JCJ Architects) in January 2008 as a consultant. The contract, approved by the School Committee, was for assisting the Facilities Needs Committee in planning for a NEW school in the vicinity of \$37 Million including loan interest.

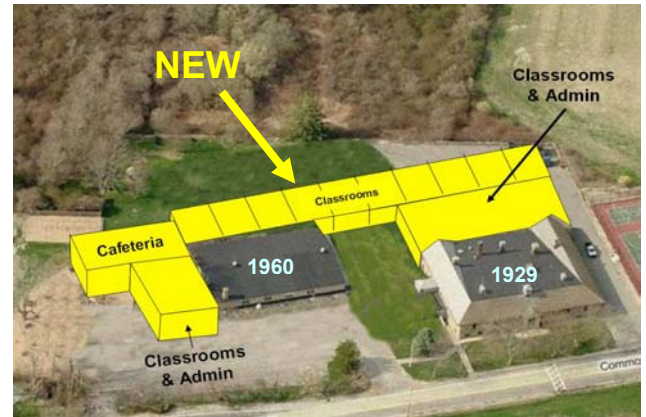
Although the Facilities Needs Committee had no business jumping into implementation of the "needs" that it identified, it did so anyway. Their plan is to demolish almost all of the existing school and build new rather than try to solve the problems with the existing school. The following pictures illustrate the approach.



**Existing Wilbur & McMahon School**

As shown above, only the 1929 original building and the 1960 gym are saved. Everything else goes. Note: we are still paying the loan for the 1991 additions! The end product conceptually would look like the illustration on the right.

The Facilities Needs Committee, with the assistance of JCJ Architects, fallaciously revised the "renovation" option to nearly \$19 Million to justify the new school approach. But the Little Compton Taxpayers Association saw major exaggerations in the new number and requested an independent estimate to be made. That was done by RGB Architects in October 2009 resulting in an estimated cost of \$10.5 Million for renovation.



**The "New" Wilbur & McMahon School**

The new school approach pushed by the School Committee (in a 4-to-1 vote) would require a 20-year loan with a total estimated cost of \$37 Million... AND ...a promise from the RI Department of Education (RIDE) to kick in 1/3 of the cost or \$13 Million. We find this hard to believe in the current economic situation we are all aware of. The impact on your tax bill (in addition to the normal increase)?

### With RIDE Money

\$300K Home.....	\$182 per year
\$400K Home.....	\$243 per year
\$500K Home.....	\$303 per year
\$600K Home.....	\$364 per year
\$700K Home.....	\$425 per year

### With NO RIDE Money

\$300K Home.....	\$273 per year
\$400K Home.....	\$364 per year
\$500K Home.....	\$455 per year
\$600K Home.....	\$546 per year
\$700K Home.....	\$637 per year

The renovation approach is also eligible for RIDE money, but unlike the new construction approach, it can be phased in over a 10-year period without a loan. However, the School Committee has rejected this approach and wants a new school at tremendous cost to the taxpayers. The new school would require the children to be relocated to temporary quarters during construction for as long as perhaps two years. Not so with the renovation approach. There is no denying that there are problems at the school, but they can be fixed at a reasonable price without building a new school.

Having over-stepped its responsibilities, the Facilities Needs Committee was dissolved on Sep 9, 2009 and replaced with yet another committee - the School Building Committee! And the School Committee **RESTRICTED** its work to a **NEW** school.

A \$37 Million cost for a town of 3,600 people equates to over \$10,000 per person for a new school that has not been proven necessary! Does this make sense? This situation is still developing and the Taxpayers Association will continue to monitor it. We feel that the case for a new school has not been made or justified. The case for renovation is a good one and the estimated cost to do so needs to be evaluated completely and honestly. We have serious doubts about the objectivity of the present School Committee and the new Building Committee to achieve that goal; their performance to date has been a disappointment.

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**\*\* TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER \*\***

**LITTLE COMPTON TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM** (Vol. X, No. 2)

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

OFFICE PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Local 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: \$15 (Single) \$25 (Family) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Other)

Mail this form and your contribution to: Little Compton Taxpayers Association  
PO Box 455  
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