

Correspondence received by the
Concord Select Board
Week Ending – October 21, 2024

1. Laura Kanga - 2 Greenfield Lane
2. Jill Colpak - 20 Concord Greene
3. Elizabeth Spaulding - 22 Concord Greene Unit 5
4. Kristen Hagerty - Revolutionary Rd
5. Barbara Magee - 454 Old Marlboro Road
6. Haley Orvedal - 1596 Main Street
7. Frank (Rich) Feeley III – Concord Housing
Foundation, Inc.
8. Jane McHan, PhD - 12-1 Concord Greene
9. Carol Gordon - Concord Greene

October 9, 2024

To: Select Board
22 Monument Square
PO Box 535
Concord, MA 01742

From: Laura Kangas
2 Greenfield Lane
Concord, MA. 01742

Subject: Property Tax Exemption

My understanding is that this topic is now in the hands of the Select Board, so I want to be sure to share my opinion and experiences with you.

For me, the property tax exemption has made it possible for me to stay in my home. I am 71 years old and have lived in my home for over 34 years. My story has to do with the "golden years"; however, I know many young people with moderate incomes who would like to stay in Concord, who have also been helped tremendously by the property tax exemption.

Sadly, in my opinion, Concord has become a town of many very high-income people, and much less of moderate to lower income. For the higher income people, the tax increase is most likely barely noticeable but for moderate to lower income people, the increase in town spending that created the huge tax bill could be devastating.

The \$110 million dollar bill for the Middle School has clearly taken its toll on the community. It is too late to change the cost of the Middle School but not too late to try to continue to try to share the burden more equitably. My guess is that the people that were selected for the property tax exemption were carefully vetted. Please consider that people truly do need this.

Thank you for your service to the Town of Concord.

Best,

Laura Kangas

Laura Kangas

Greetings,

I am writing in support of the tax break for lower valued, owner occupied homes in Concord.

I attended the public session on September 29 and heard many opinions. I especially liked the suggestion that Concord seek to convert the prison property into a commercial zone with research companies or similar in order to increase the tax base and give everyone some relief from the increasing taxes. Concord should be an attractive location, being between Rtes 95/128 and 495 with many options for residence in towns further west that are more reasonably priced, if anything in Massachusetts is.

I would hate to have to move from Concord. I have been here 43+ years now at Concord Greene. Many of my neighbors are long time Concord residents who have downsized and could buy here and still have something left from a home sale to contribute to being on a fixed income. A number of these folks have also served the Town on many boards and committees and are vested in the Town of Concord, as I am. There are also many residents who have children and grandchildren in the area.

As I said at the meeting: please save this tax relief provision for a few years, at least, until the tax base can be widened and any other tax considerations be examined.

Thank you, and thank you for your service on the Select Board,

Jill Colpak

20 Concord Greene

To Andrea Fountain, executive director of the Select Board and the other members of the Select Board

I have been a resident of Concord since 1966 and have raised my family here. I love Concord and would love to continue living here. I am currently living at Concord Greene. The RTE benefits would make it easier for me to remain here— I hope the benefits will be extended.

Thank you!

Elizabeth Spaulding

22 Concord Greene Unit 5

betsypaulding225@gmail.com

Dear Chair Hartman and Members of the Board,

Thank you for holding the recent public hearing on the residential tax exemption. It is always good to see hearty citizen turnout, and I appreciate the Board's willingness to seek feedback to inform their decisions.

As an avid follower of town committee meetings, I appreciate that the Select Board is composed of members with differing viewpoints. That ability to hold differing viewpoints and respectful, transparent discussion, although not easy, are essential to both good decision making and maintaining public trust.

Clearly the issue of high property taxes is a challenging topic to discuss, address, and take action on. It is not the only challenging issue that this Board or other Boards have or will have to tackle. It's the nature of your public service, and I appreciate your willingness to do the hard work.

As a concerned citizen, I look to the Select Board to be leaders and uniters - focusing on the problem at hand, seeking and considering public input, and making decisions for the best interest of the community- rather than dividers. You have the opportunity to allow citizens to air their differences of opinions, promote respectful discourse, and help to reconcile them in a way that we can all live together with the result. Tone is critical to that effort.

So I was disappointed when Select Board member Mr. McKennitt was the first to speak in a hearing designed for him and the other Board members to listen. While Mr. McKennitt maintains the right to free speech along with every other citizen, as a member of the Board seeking public input, it would seem more appropriate for him to listen during the public comment portion and share his views during deliberation. Instead, in my opinion, Mr. McKennitt's remarks set an adversarial tone, establishing opposing camps, rather than recognizing the legitimacy of both points of view and the need to come together to make a decision.

The Select Board plays a critical role in modeling how we want our town to feel. I hope to see our town discuss, listen to each other, disagree respectfully, and to ultimately come together with space for our differing views. We look to our elected policy makers to set the tone and help us to manage our differences in a constructive manner. I urge the members of the Select Board to reflect on the events of the public hearing, the opportunity you have to act as uniters, and the responsibility you have to model the civility we all hope to enjoy in Concord.

Sincerely,

Kristen Hagerty

Revolutionary Rd

Dear Select Board Members,

As a retired teacher on a fixed income I'd like to give you my feedback on the new trash collection system.

I am in support of finding more efficient ways to collect trash and recyclables and to help our community reach carbon neutral goals. I am an avid recycler and composter.

I am a one person household. The town trash system's previous options for a barrel sticker or pay per bag tags worked well for me because my trash can was full only about every 3 weeks. It was relatively inexpensive. The new payment system will be about \$100 more annually for me.

I imagine many single person households are feeling the same tension. I trust the smart people managing our town will figure out a fair solution.

Best,

Barbara Magee

454 Old Marlboro Rd

Hi Terri,

Feel free to send on to the rest of the SB. I just recalled your name specifically in the Bridge article about the vote to get a formal assessment of the peabody property. I just wanted to provide public comment on the topic.

I appreciate the quote clarifying that the goal here is NOT "highest and best use" of the land. In fact, highest and best are competing terms more and more these days. From my perspective, the town of Concord has an amazing opportunity here to control, for once, development and see it done right rather than being in the passenger seat, at best, once a developer has the land in their control. This site and the superfund site are great opportunities to do the right thing by the town, not sell it off to the highest bidder to turn into something controversial. The only possible residential developer the town could and should support at the Peabody site is someone like NOW communities, who we can trust to do something right.

Please also try to preserve some playing fields that can be bubbled in the winter or when we have climate change weather issues...which are only going to grow more and more common. EEE, air quality concerns, extreme heat. We'll face once of these every summer going forward. We will need more indoor space optionality for all ages....whether it is for pickleball or kids soccer. And we need it not just on the east side of town.

Peabody is the only near-term (as the superfund site is a long way out) property the town can make sure gets developed by and for the town without paying out the nose for new land. Please please take the opportunity to ensure it gets done right.

Many thanks,

Haley Orvedal

1596 Main St



Concord Housing Foundation, Inc

Working to Preserve Concord's Housing Diversity

October 16, 2024

Ms. Mary Hartman, Chair
Concord Select Board

We write with urgency to encourage the Select Board to retain the existing “residential exemption” applied in calculating property taxes paid by homeowners in Concord. The Board of the Concord Housing Foundation voted unanimously on October 9 to request that the Select Board continue the current policy.

We followed with great interest the recent Select Board hearing on this matter. While we recognize the concerns of those who may have experienced a somewhat higher tax increase, most of these households are in a better financial position to pay increased property taxes. We implore you to maintain the status quo, because the alternative will be an even more rapid loss of Concord’s housing stock at the lower end of the price range.

In general, those with smaller, lower valued homes have lower incomes. Increased taxes may be hard for them to pay, and if the increase is too large, they will be motivated to sell their homes and move elsewhere. We all know what happens to those homes. They are bought by developers, torn down, and replaced by much larger structures selling for \$2 million or more. Each time this happens, Concord loses a home that is potentially affordable to those with moderate incomes, and it will never get it back.

We recognize the comments made at the hearing suggesting that Concord find other ways of moderating residential tax increases. Scrutiny of Town and School Board budgets is appropriate, particularly the tradition of granting inflationary increases in School spending when student numbers are falling. But these cuts will be controversial, and may not be approved.

We also understand the desire to increase non-residential tax rolls in Concord. This solution assumes that land is available, and that developers will want to create non-residential uses. The current market for office and laboratory space in the Boston area suggests that it will be difficult to encourage such investments. Perhaps there may be some opportunity at MCI Concord, but it will be years before any such facility will come on the tax rolls. And if we do build offices, labs or factories, where are the workers going to live.? “Let them live in Fitchburg, Leominster or Lowell” is not an answer to housing those who work with and for us.

The need for more affordable housing is evident across a spectrum of income levels. The residential tax exemption is one way to help lower-income homeowners in Concord. Please do

not abandon this policy in the hope that there is another way to reduce taxes. That would only accelerate the loss of Concord's more affordable housing stock.

Frank (Rich) Feeley
President
Concord Housing Foundation

To: the Concord Select Board

I want to thank you for the tax reduction last year. As an 84 year old senior, I have contributed to Concord's economy and I love living at Concord Greene.

I would like to ask you to please continue this tax reduction for our houses.

Jane McHan, PhD

12-1 Concord Greene

I respectfully request that the select board vote in favor of the residential property tax exemption on November 18, 2024.

Thank you.

Carol Gordon
Concord Greene
cgordon4@comcast.net