

RAY BOAS
Statement to Walpole, NH Selectboard
25 March 2021

I have a letter to read into tonight's minutes. I desire the full text be included in the body of the minutes, and not as an attachment to the minutes. To make it easier, and for correctness, I will email a copy to Selectboard members and the Manager of Administration to give to the board secretary to copy/paste. This evening's minutes will not be approved until the meeting on April 1. After approval, it has often taken up to five days to get the approved minutes out to the public. Thus, I will probably be posting my comments on-line sooner.

On March 12, I was emailed and asked that based upon discussion at the Selectboard meeting March 11, the Selectboard "...would like to discuss the granite curbing donation offer with you. Can you be at next week's, 3/18/2021 Meeting to discuss this matter?" I replied in the affirmative, and on the 25th was sent an email Zoom invite from the Selectboard office. At the beginning of the meeting on the 25th, I was asked to speak. I repeated my offer in conjunction with the water/sewer upgrade and repaving project.

It is difficult to understand how an offer of gifting granite curbing to the Town instead suddenly became a project of widening Elm Street by eight feet west, thus removing, or causing to die, a number of trees that provide shade and beauty for this focal point of Walpole. I invite you to read the piece I wrote last year "Only the Trees are Different" - it is on the CLARION website. In January, 2020, the Selectboard noted many of our trees are dying. The attempt to study and correct this situation with planned new tree plantings was halted by COVID.

An explanation for the road widening and tree removal offered to me is that it is a safety issue with parking in front of the Town Hall. The angle parking there is problematic. Space is tight, and when backing out it can be hard to see vehicles approaching from the north. But removing trees and widening the street there and continuing further south with the widening is not the solution. This sudden and last minute change of course, presented by Walpole's Road Agent, to be done in conjunction with the upcoming Elm Street water/sewer project, without support of contracted professional studies, and proper notification and interaction with Walpole's residents, is unconscionable.

I respectfully request that work on the Elm Street water and sewer lines be held in abeyance, and not begun until the following studies are completed, studied, shared with

the community, and discussed. There are solutions to the safety issue without road widening and the removal of trees. Solutions that preserve the aesthetics and beauty of Walpole's Town Common. A number of Elm Street residents, residents around the Common, and around Town share my concerns.

**STUDIES AND REPORTS REQUIRED PRIOR TO WATER/SEWER WORK ON
ELM STREET, AND ROAD WIDENING AND TREE REMOVAL
AS STATED BY THE ROAD AGENT**

**COMPARABLE STUDIES SHOULD BE CONDUCTED PRIOR TO ANY
SIMILAR SIGNIFICANT WALPOLE ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECT**

The following studies should be performed and shared with the community for discussion prior to commencing any work on Elm Street on the Water/Sewer project, or stated widening of the roadway:

1 - The Traffic and Transportation Analysis Section of Walpole's Master Plan (adopted December 8, 1998) provides on page 11 the NHDOT recommended street widths based upon traffic counts. The minimum for a Class V Road, as is Elm Street, is 18 feet. Elm Street is approximately 21-22 +/- feet wide from the church south. Twenty-four feet is "recommended for roads that have 1500 trips or more per day." I request a traffic flow and count study for two weeks around the Common at the following points using monitoring equipment that tracks travel in both directions and time of day:

a - Elm Street at the intersection with Westminster Street, and also at the south end of the Common on Elm Street

b - Washington Street at the intersection with Westminster Street and also at the intersection with Middle Street

c - At the end of Elm Street prior to flowing into South Street

d - On Middle Street just off Main Street to capture travel in both directions

2 - It was acknowledged during the 18 March Selectboard meeting that a comprehensive review of the health of the trees on and around the Common should be conducted. It is imperative that we look forward so future generations can appreciate the same beauty and aesthetics (and probably improved) from what we currently have. I request a written report be prepared for the Town. I recommend that Forester, Steve Roberge, of the

Cheshire County UNH Cooperative Extension be engaged to study the area, and submit a written report.

3 - The dollar amount per foot for installation of granite curbing stated by the Road Agent during the meeting on 18 March does not seem right. I request that three Requests for Proposals (RFPs) be obtained, and broken down between stone cost and installation cost along Elm Street from the Town Hall south to the end of the Common, and beyond.

4 - A professional engineering company (PE - member of the National Society of Professional Engineers) be engaged to provide a written report including:

a - Engineering specifications for the proper installation of end pieces of granite curbing to minimize damage to snowplows by careless equipment operators. Additionally, provide operating procedures to alleviate roadside, and equipment damage where curbing is not installed. Further provide recommendations highway department personnel may utilize to avoid equipment issues with curbing during other seasons.

b - Obtain a written cost, and potential savings, analysis of the installation and reinstallation of asphalt based curbing (as recommended by the Road Agent) versus granite curbing over the following periods of time: three years after installation, five years, ten years, twenty-five years; and, fifty years.

c - Provide the dollar cost of the heretofore unplanned and unbudgeted widening of Elm Street by eight feet including base site prep and paving.

5 - Secure a written environmental impact study of widening Elm Street to also include potential damage to Colonial home foundations with automobile and truck traffic eight feet closer to those foundations. Some Elm Street homes currently shake with southbound, often speeding traffic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed widening of Elm Street is not necessary. And, most recently the Road Agent has stated to a resident he plans to widen Washington Street next year. The first recommendation below will help improve the parking concern in front of the Town Hall:

1 - Change the angle parking in front of the Town Hall from 45 degrees to 60 degrees, leaving the curbing where it is. It will be easier for a vehicle to pull in and out. And, most important, a vehicle pulling out will have an easier view of what they are backing into.

2 - Install granite curbing instead of proposed asphalt composition during the repaving of Elm Street. The study requested above should prove cost savings over time. On their website, Swenson Granite has several studies showing lower maintenance cost over time. Angled styles of granite curbing minimize the potential of damage to snowplows and tires. Granite curbing will enhance this area of Town and the Common. The recent decision by the Selectboard to switch street lighting to LED, and its cost savings over time, is a perfect example of this forward thinking planning.

3 - Consider changing the traffic pattern in and around the Common. Based upon proper traffic studies, patterns could be modified in several ways:

a - Post at the intersection of Elm and Westminster Streets possible signs: e.g. No Through Traffic — No Commercial Traffic — Town Hall Business and Residents Only

b - Make Elm Street one way south during the hours the Town Hall is open. - roughly 8 AM to 4 PM, Monday through Thursday. Enforce the same during concerts, Old Home Day activities, and other events such as weddings. This has been done in the past.

c - Make Elm Street from Westminster Street south to the end of the Common permanently one way south.

d - Make Washington Street one way north bound from Middle Street to Westminster Street - thus there would be (in conjunction with Elm Street one way southbound) a counter clockwise traffic flow around Walpole's Common - one of the few bucolic Commons left in New England.

4 - While I have this opportunity, there are other difficult and dangerous parking and driving situations in the Village. Once parking is available in the Brownfield rehabilitation, the following should be considered:

a - It is difficult for two cars to pass (particularly when snow is allowed to pile up along the curbs) on Westminster Street between Washington Street and the Fountain. Parking should be discontinued there on the south side of the street, as it is currently not allowed at the head of the Common.

b - The angled spaces on Main Street between the Fountain and exit from Burdick's parking lot should be eliminated. It is almost impossible when pulling out of Burdick's (or from Westminster Street) to see a car in the other location.

c - With parking completed at the Brownfield lot (we should have a contest for its naming - e.g. Plating Park, possibly my historical designation entry), employees of businesses in the Village should be encouraged, if not required, to park there. That will get many vehicles out of the areas I mention above, and provide more customer parking to help what remaining businesses we have in town.

5 - The Selectboard should familiarize themselves with RSA 231:65. I have personally observed instances, and heard of others, where the provisions of this RSA should have been executed.

Thank you, I trust the proposal to widen Elm Street and remove trees, or damage their root systems, will immediately stop. We must all work smartly, and together, on all encompassing plans to preserve the community that we love, cherish, and wish to preserve.

Yours, RAY BOAS