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Town Manager

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MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Selectmen
From: Michael McCall, Assistant Town Manager
Date: January 23, 2019
Re: Ledge Road

Dear Members of the Board:

This memorandum serves as a status update relative to your request for a list of actions that the Town has undertaken in an effort to mitigate the trucking complaints originating from the Ledge Road quarries.

As you may know, shortly after Newport Materials acquired the LeMasurier Quarry in March 2017, this office fielded an increasing number of complaints regarding heavy commercial vehicles on Ledge Road, as well as nearby Dunstable, Swain and Groton Roads and Main Street. In response to these complaints, the Town has taken the following actions:

Traffic Monitoring

Starting in Fall of 2017, the Town worked with the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) to perform traffic counts on Ledge Road and the nearby roads. The Ledge Road area is now a part of NMCOG's regular traffic counting program. Since teaming up with NMCOG, the Town has compiled significant traffic data for the Ledge Road area, going back to the Spring of 2017, which allows us to look at historical trends in heavy commercial vehicular traffic volume. In early 2019, the Town added a video camera at Ledge Road as part of its monitoring efforts. Monitoring of heavy commercial vehicular traffic is ongoing.

Heavy Commercial Vehicle Exclusion (HCVE)

Based upon the foregoing traffic data, the Town demonstrated that there is significant heavy commercial vehicular traffic along Dunstable, Swain, and in particular, Ledge Road. Starting in late 2018, the Town sought the assistance of Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and NMCOG for a Heavy Commercial Vehicle Exclusion (HCVE). The rules governing an HCVE are contained in the Massachusetts Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Because there is only one way in or out of Ledge Road, MassDOT informed the Town that an HCVE was not allowed. Thereafter, the Town sought an HCVE on Swain Road. Again, MassDOT informed the Town that it could not satisfy the criterion for the viable alternative for a HCVE, which is required pursuant to the MUTCD, due to Dunstable Road flowing into the towns of Westford and Tyngsboro. The Town, however, could satisfy the criterion for an alternative truck route with approval from the abutting communities. Despite the Town's efforts, it has not received authorization to re-direct traffic into the abutting communities.

Presentations and Information Sessions

In addition to formal presentations from Staff on traffic data, traffic trends and HCVEs, the Town has invited NMCOG, MassDOT and Town Counsel to appear at regular Board of Selectmen

meetings to provide information and answer questions regarding the heavy commercial vehicular traffic. These presentations and information sessions will continue, as needed.

BOS Traffic Listening Session

This past June, the BOS held a traffic listening session. At the Listening Session, the vast majority of residents were present to speak about heavy commercial vehicular traffic along Ledge, Dunstable, Swain, and Groton Roads. In response to the issues raised at the listening session, the Traffic Safety Committee (TSC) was created. The committee has been working on all the issues raised, including heavy commercial vehicular traffic in the Town.

Enforcement

In addition to routine patrols and responses to individual complaints, the Town has been vigilant in its traffic enforcement in the Ledge, Dunstable, Swain, and Groton Road and Main Street areas. Pursuant to BOS request and discussion at the TSC, Chief Spinney implemented the North Chelmsford Traffic Action Plan. As a result, during the latter part of 2019, Chief Spinney authorized over 50 dedicated traffic enforcement deployments, which yielded almost vehicle 400 stops. Additionally, with the assistance of the Chelmsford Police, the Town secured the Massachusetts State Police Truck Team to run isolated enforcement in the area. Despite the enhanced traffic deployments, law enforcement did not note any significant heavy commercial vehicular violations. Routine patrols continue in the area.

Widening or reconfiguring the intersection of Ledge and Dunstable Roads

In early 2019, the Town sought National Grid's assistance with moving a pole at the intersection of Ledge and Dunstable Roads to enable heavy commercial vehicular traffic to enter/exit Ledge Road from the northern part of Dunstable Road. After preliminary discussion, National Grid indicated that it could not move forward without design documents from the Town. This information was presented to the Board, and the discussion evolved into the possibility of straightening the road. Said improvements, however, could not guarantee that heavy commercial vehicular traffic would refrain from turning south towards Swain Road. Pursuant to the Board's request, the Town obtained an estimate from a 3rd party for a design for the improvements at Ledge and Dunstable Roads. The cost was in the range of \$135K-\$150K for the design proposal, which was presented to the Board.

Road Debris

Two times, in the last year, the Town received reports of significant amounts of gravel spilled along Ledge, Dunstable, Swain, and Groton Roads. In both instances, the Town immediately responded to the area and cleaned the roadways. Further, in both instances, the Town contacted the quarry owners by mail and telephone to discuss the problem in an effort to mitigate future issues. In the coming weeks, representatives from the two gravel operations will be meeting with the Town to develop an action plan.

Alternate Ingress/Egress from Route 40

The Town contacted several of the abutting, commercial property owners along the west side of US Route 3 regarding a possible ingress/egress to the quarries from Route 40. With the exception of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the abutting property owners were open to the concept. Although, the Town enlisted the assistance of Rep. Golden, MassDOT stated the plan was not feasible, and they had no interest in pursuing it. The Town has continued to discuss this issue with the interested parties in hopes of finding an alternate route.

Sidewalks/Roadway Narrowing

Pursuant to the Board's request, the Town investigated the cost and feasibility of placing sidewalks along Ledge and Dunstable Roads. The rationale for the sidewalks was twofold: 1) the safety of the pedestrians and residents in the area; and 2) the addition of sidewalks would

appear to narrow the roadway and act as a traffic-calming device. The Town presented the Board with approximate costs for the sidewalks to be \$200K for Ledge Road and \$340K for Dunstable Road, including crosswalks and takings. This assumes that DPW would perform the design work and permitting. The difficulty, however, is that Dunstable Road crosses in and out of the Town of Tyngsboro, and the Town is prohibited from spending public funds outside its jurisdiction.

Executive Session Briefings

In addition to presentations and information sessions during regular Board meetings, Staff and Town Counsel have appeared at Executive Session to provide information and answer questions about potential litigation regarding heavy commercial vehicular traffic on Ledge Road. Staff and Town Counsel will continue to appear at Executive Session, as needed.

Preferred Truck Routes

Pursuant to the Board's request, the Town has sought guidance from MassDOT and NMCOG relative to the creation of preferred truck routes. NMCOG has suggested a regional or collaborative approach to developing said routes. Most recently, the TSC has begun to identify such routes in Town, and it will work with Board, NMCOG and the neighboring communities to finalize the routes. After which, the DPW will post preferred truck route signage, as needed.

Cul-de-sac/School Bus Turnaround

While discussing the widening or reconfiguring the intersection of Ledge and Dunstable Road, the question of creating a cul-de-sac/school bus turnaround at the end of Ledge Road was raised. The rationale for the cul-de-sac/school bus turnaround was twofold: 1) the safety of the children along Ledge Road; and 2) the ability of school buses to traverse Ledge Road would act as a traffic-calming device. The Town advised the Board the approximate cost for the cul-de-sac/school bus turnaround would be \$62,100. The Town is currently waiting to go to Annual Town Meeting to obtain the necessary easements prior to commencing the project.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael McCall
Assistant Town Manager