

**TOWN OF WALPOLE  
MEETING OF THE SELECTBOARD  
PUBLIC HEARING  
JULY 18, 2019**

Selectboard Present: Steven Dalessio (Chair); Peggy Pschirrer; Cheryl Mayberry

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Dalessio called this Public Hearing to order at 6:00 PM in the Walpole Town Hall. He advised this Public Hearing is being recorded and asked anyone wishing to speak to identify themselves for the record. There were 32 members of the public in attendance.

**PUBLIC HEARING – Old Drewsville Road:** Mr. Dalessio advised a sign-in sheet is being passed around. This Public Hearing is Regarding the Paving of the Dirt Portion of Old Drewsville Road. Mr. Dalessio received phone calls from Mr. Biron and Mr. and Mrs. Gowdy as soon as they heard about plans to pave the hill south of the Biron driveway. At that time he felt it would be best to bring all the parties together to hear the different concerns, pro and cons. He asked Police Chief Michael Paquette and Mr. Mark Houghton from the Fire Department EMS to attend to talk about this from their standpoint.

Mr. Rau, Highway Department Supervisor, explained that about 10 years ago there was an average of 350 vehicles on that road each day. The State's Scientific Study recommends that any road having over 50 vehicles on it daily should be paved. Not all of this road will be paved. It is 1600 feet from south of Mr. Biron's driveway and the other side just past the Hubbard's landing. Those are the two worse mud spots in Town. During the spring, these spots take the most stone as compared to other roads. During this past winter one of the Town's plow trucks could not make it up the hill because the road is so out of shape. The truck got stuck three times. It slid back down the hill. The driver was not injured but he was stuck there for over two hours. Other drivers/trucks were called in to assist. This was the worst mud season he has seen in 15 years. This spring the fire trucks and emergency services trucks could not get through. It is just as wide everywhere on that road; they will not widen it any more than they have to. The dirt parts range from 19-foot wide to the smallest of 17-foot wide. About 10 years ago they paved the portion by Mr. Biron's down to the Gowdy farm and widened the corner just a little bit for better visibility. He does not believe there was ever an accident on that part of the road. This is the coldest road in Town. If you put sand on, it might help but it will stay ice; salt works a lot better.

Mr. Basora asked about the mileage. Mr. Rau explained basically they will pave 1/3 of the dirt part; it is counting the Village side and the Valley Road side. Each section is about 1600 feet. The middle section is the longest one and it is dirt. About 2013 there were some improvements, some widening and some trees were cut. That is the last time anything was widened. They have not done a car count since the last one. Chief Paquette said they could do a count with the speed unit.

Mr. Winmill understands the costs involved including regrading. Mr. Rau said it costs about \$3,000 a year for gravel on that road plus 2-or-3 days to do it and then maintain it. Cost of paving those sections is about \$10,000. Mr. Winmill asked about emergency vehicles. Mr. Houghton replied this past spring he had a vehicle get stuck on an EMS call. The rescue truck was also stuck and a wrecker had to pull it out; this was about 15 years ago. Mr. Dalessio advised that EMS people sometimes use their own vehicles to respond to calls. Replying to a question from a resident regarding the direction the plow truck uses, Mr. Rau explained the route. Mr. Dalessio mentioned they will look at the route as a discussion item. Mr. Rau advised on an average year, a gravel road loses about 2 inches.

Karen Kuniholm wanted to talk about issues other than cost; the picturesque and aesthetics of the area. She does not want the road paved. At times she goes into town before the plow truck arrives and has no

problem with all-season tires on the dirt part. The paved surface is more treacherous. She does want vehicles to slow down but to keep the road useful for the town vehicles.

Mr. Jerry Stolper asked the Police Department what kind of policing has been done on that road. Chief Paquette responded they are usually busy with criminal activities but they try to put in as much time as they can in all areas. On this road the crashes are minimal but the majority are youthful drivers. The State wants them to patrol where the crashes are. He plans to put the speed unit on that road. Mr. Dalessio spoke to Chief Paquette and they will do a concerted effort once school opens to park an officer on the road to look for speeders. There is the road and enforcement. Chief Paquette will work with the High School and go to their first assembly in September to remind all young drivers to be careful.

Mr. Houghton reported that from a public safety standpoint, he wanted to back-up previous statements made. In 2009 they went to the area 1 time; in 2010 they went there twice; in 2012 they went three times. Then some work was done on the road, trees were cut back and people thought the road would be faster but the EMS only responded one time. These improvements made a huge difference. Chief Paquette said when he first came to town, the department was there all the time; all up-and-down the road.

Mr. Juris had four questions that included drainage, engineering and if an assessment had been made. Mr. Rau said they go by the general road standards and explained the process he uses. They post just about every road in town. The only road unposted is Main Street because they cannot stop all the trucks. The money for paving the road is in the budget.

Several residents spoke on what they have witnessed on the road that included motor vehicles speeding and sometimes vehicles ending off the road. Drivers tend to slow down when they hit the dirt section. There were mixed opinions on whether this section of road should be paved or remain dirt. If the Town paves another 1600 feet of road, will that increase speed?

Carolyn Vose said growing up, Old Drewsville Road was always considered a beautiful back road. Mr. Dalessio replied that, at this time, there is no intention to pave the rest of the road.

Christy Winmill feels more paving of the road will bring in even more traffic.

Mr. Biron has a ton of respect for what Mr. Rau and his highway crew does. Growing up, this was a Class VI road and then it got turned into a Class V road. Over the years, the Town kept putting money on this road. Why do we keep improving the Old Drewsville Road? It was not intended to be built up the way it is today. Trucks use that road. These roads are not wide enough. Mr. Rau said they cannot stop people from traveling on any public road. Some people find this road and think this road is a short-cut. Mr. Dalessio agreed to put up more speed signs on the road but there needs to be enforcement.

Mr. Basora brought up the fact that many years ago Hodgkins and Sons was mandated by the Planning Board not to use the Old Drewsville Road to go into the Village. However, they have been using the road again; there has been no enforcement. Mr. Ernie Vose agreed this was one of Hodgkins's stipulations.

Mrs. Holly Gowdy has lived on the Old Drewsville Road for about 24 years. They have a small farm and have dairy cattle. A milk truck comes to their farm every other day. In 24 years she has seen it all on this road. There are times she does not feel it is safe. She has concerns when they are crossing the road with their cows. Eventually the Town will have to put guardrails on sections of this road. She would like more consideration to be given before more paving is done on this road.

Mr. Merklein spoke about witnessing speeding vehicles. He asked about speed bumps. Mr. Rau would have to look this up to see if they are legal or if they can be put anywhere.

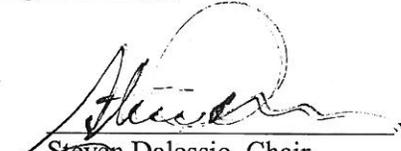
Mr. Mark Houghton spoke about the number of crashes on this road and the fact they seemed to diminish when the road was brought up to a better standard. The purpose is that Mr. Rau wants is to make the road more accessible year-round. They need to get emergency vehicles up from the Drewsville end, not get stuck in the mud. They went to that road 67 times to render medical or fire service during that same 10 year period. Access for emergency services is huge. There are now more houses on this road which generates more traffic. It is more reason for them to have emergency access. A resident mentioned going in the other direction. Mr. Dalessio stated that seconds matter when emergency services are trying to reach a person in need of medical service or a property fire.

Mr. Winmill handed in two emails relative to paving Old Drewsville Road. One was from Pauline Barnes and Adrian Basora and the second one was from James Skofield. They will be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

Mr. Dalessio summarized that the Selectboard heard a lot of comments at this Public Hearing. They will be reviewed. It was important to hear all the issues. He thanked everyone for coming. Chief Paquette will try to get the officers to check on the road at least once during a shift.

Mr. Dalessio closed this Public Hearing at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary



Steven Dalessio, Chair



Peggy L. Pschirrer



Cheryl Mayberry

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the July 25, 2019, Selectboard meeting.)



Tom Winmill <twinmillmobile@gmail.com>

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**James Skofield** Wed, Jul 17, 10:42 AM (1 day ago)

to me, Christie, Pauline, Adrian, Pauline, Evans, Jared, David, karen, Joe, Helen, Mervin, joannaandrosmsw

Hi, Tom and Christie and all:

In principle, I'm with you -- but only up to a point. As I see it, there *are* a few places (already paved ones) on Old Drewsville Road that really feel too narrow for two cars to pass by one another at a comfortable distance. And that's assuming that both cars are travelling within the speed limit and are careful in passing one another. Those conditions don't always obtain. There are lots of drivers who pass our house doing 50 mph or more, even in bad winter weather. To say nothing of the large lumber trucks and lawn service trucks that rumble past at regular intervals during the day. I've taken often to pulling off the road at what used to be Tucker Burr's old veterinary clinic building in order to let some of the "cowboys" roll by.

Some of that poor road behavior might be amended by more careful speed limit posting and monitoring, but even such actions will not widen the road bed where it's just too narrow.

I would prefer to learn exactly what expansion or alteration plans are being advocated before making my mind up whether: a.) they are warranted; and b.) how such plans would be executed and the costs and time frames involved in doing so.

I cannot attend the Selectboard's meeting tomorrow evening, but hope that you'll give us all an update on what transpires.

Thanks,

Jim



Tom Winmill <twinmillmobile@gmail.com>

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## Paving Old Drewsville Road

1 message

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**Pauline Barnes** <p7019margaret@gmail.com>

Thu, Jul 18, 2019 at  
10:17 AM

To: tom Winmill <twinmillmobile@gmail.com>

Cc: basora adrian <aabasora@gmail.com>

To the Selectboard:

We join our neighbors in opposing further paving on Old Drewsville Road.

Pauline gave up her daily walks on Old Drewsville Road because she felt they placed her in danger.

The road already suffers from incessant speeding, and its rolling topography creates multiple blind spots for both drivers and pedestrians. Extending the pavement would extend a speedway and put more lives at risk.

Pauline Barnes and Adrian Basora  
67 Old North Main Street