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Pine Point barrier to remain, only shortened

By Peggy Roberts (published: October 05, 2006)

SCARBOROUGH – Town councilors decided Wednesday to keep the Depot Street barrier that directs traffic from Pine Point Road onto King Street. But the length of the asphalt strip, sometimes called a chicane, will be shortened to make the opening a standard-size road width.



Blanche Cook of Scarborough is presented with a bouquet of flowers by Town Councilor Carol Rancourt, left, as Town Manager Ron Owens looks on at Wednesday's council meeting. Cook, who will turn 105 on Oct. 13, also received a State Sentiment in honor of her birthday.

Roberts photo

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Some believe the barrier's presence creates the impression that Depot Street is a private road – part of the Lighthouse Motor Inn's parking lot. In particular, it has been a source of contention for the Pine Point Residents Group that has lobbied for its removal as part of a bigger plan to open up an "Ocean Gateway" at the end of the 200-foot-long dead-end street.

Council Chairman Steven Ross introduced an order to remove the barrier altogether at the Sept. 20 meeting. But it was tabled to allow councilors to gather more information.

When Ross brought it forward again Wednesday, he had amended the original from removing the barrier to shortening it.

During public comments, Nick Truman, who owns the Lighthouse Inn along with his brother, Peter, spoke in support of the compromise version, pointing out a traffic study that recommended the original barrier.

"The council took (the study's) advice and since then there have been no reported accidents," Truman said. "The traffic that enters Depot Street comes in at a reduced speed and the signage that was erected directs thru-traffic to Pine Point's Ocean Gateway, now known as Hurd Park."

Harold Hutchinson spoke for the Pine Point Residents Group, saying "Depot Street is extremely privatized at this point." Charging the council with "representing the community at large," Hutchinson requested the councilors eliminate the barrier so "the town would gain access to the Atlantic Ocean."

Councilors debated the options of cutting back the barrier versus removing it completely. They studied photographs of the area and discussed standard town road widths.

During their discussion, as they had allowed Truman to clarify questions on the barrier, they allowed Hutchinson a second chance to speak, as well. He expressed dismay that the council was considering an amendment to the original order.

"The reason we've proposed the council order is, by doing that (removing the barrier), it now gives the town leverage...and you're going to end up with a better package than by piecemealing something," Hutchinson said.

But Ross reminded him that he was taking "little steps."

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"Until I brought up my order at the previous meeting, nothing was going to happen," Ross said.

Councilors Carol Rancourt and Shawn Babine both wanted to remove the barrier for the winter and wait until spring to make a final decision on the issue.

Councilor Patrick O'Reilly said he received two e-mails from Pine Point residents and at least three phone calls, all saying that "the barrier system worked and this summer's barrier was acceptable."

"I don't see this as the public being denied access," O'Reilly said. "If anything, it's opening up access in a thoughtful way. Without the barrier, it's a public hazard."

Though the council did debate the exact width of the road opening, the amendment its members finally passed, by 4-2, will make the road width 31 feet, including a 5-foot-wide crosswalk, and will reduce the barrier to a length of 19 feet, measured perpendicularly from the motel side.

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