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3 November 2014

Town of Hinesburg  
Select Board

dear Select Board members,

My apologies for my muddled presentation to the board this evening. The person from the back of the room rushing around and pushing things in my face, gesticulating and yelling at me, caused me to quite lose the thread of what I had intended to say to the board. I understand that it is considered to be a good idea to record meetings; but when the people who are making the recordings are allowed free reign to disrupt meetings, interrupt the proceedings, make demands, and forcibly interject themselves between participants and the board, it actually makes participation very difficult. I believe all of us have a right to participate in the democratic and civil process without being subjected to that kind of treatment.

My intention in offering to the town a right of way for a bike path across the Carse farm is really quite modest. While I appreciate the comment from the representative of the Trails committee to the effect that this will connect outlying communities with the village center, that is not really the case. The easement I am offering runs along Charlotte Road from Lagoon Road to some distance down Baldwin Road; it could be said that it really goes from nowhere to nowhere. In any case, Lagoon Road is still some distance from the village.

I grew up on Charlotte Road in the 1950's and 60's, and have seen a dramatic change in traffic over the years. I have come to fear for my own safety when walking, or driving farm tractors along Charlotte Road. The sight distances are poor and the behavior of car drivers has become very dangerous. My primary concern with this easement is safety. While it will not help me operating farm tractors, I do hope it may keep some of the walkers, joggers, and bikers who also use the road out of harm's way. The same is true of the affected section of Baldwin Road, which has become a drag strip where vehicle speeds of 60 mph are not uncommon. Neither Charlotte nor Baldwin Roads have any shoulders - a holdover, like myself, from a time when things moved more slowly in Hinesburg - and no adequate way to safely accomodate non-vehicular users of the roads.

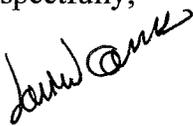
I recognize that the proposed easement only very partially addresses the problem, but it is a start which perhaps over time and with cooperation might be expanded. And of course primary in my mind is the thought that an opportunity is to be taken here before the property passes from one owner to multiple.

In response to the question as to the exact terminus points of the easement, I am enclosing an aerial photo from "Google Earth" with the proposed easement marked as a blue line; with the hope that the details of the aerial photo, showing identifiable homes, driveways, and other landmarks, may help to clarify. The easement runs from my eastern property line across from Lagoon Road in the upper right of the photograph, to my southern property line some distance south of Fletcher Farm Road at the bottom of the photo.

I'm not sure how coherently I expressed the time factor at the hearing this evening. I have received final subdivision approval from the DRB and intend to be listing some of the parcels involved in the easement, with a real estate agent by the end of November. I apologize for any note of urgency, and I know that there are more pressing issues before the Board at this time, but it does appear that there may be a limited window to this proposal. I would want to have executed and recorded the easement deed to the town before I am faced with a purchase contract on any of the lots. I would like to say we could be safe for some months, but one never knows.

Thank you for your consideration. And to each of the Board members, thank you also for what was evident at this evening's hearing: the many hours you take from your lives to try to understand the challenges facing the town in these interesting times, and to attempt, as best one can, to make a path toward what lies ahead. I don't suppose anyone, myself included, will agree with everything you decide to do or how you do it; but your contribution and service is greatly appreciated.

respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan O'Neil", written in a cursive style.