September 22, 2008

To: Select Board, Town of Amherst

Dear members of the Select Board and Mr. Shaffer,

At its meeting of September 9, 2008, the Public Works Committee discussed the Lincoln Avenue traffic calming proposals outlined by Mr. Shaffer in his letter to the committee of August 4, 2008. A summary of the committee's response is as follows:

The committee recommends against full or partial closures of Lincoln and Sunset (alternatives 1 and 2); against one-way loops in the neighborhood (alternative 6); and against measures designed to restrict truck traffic (alternative 3) and turning onto Dana Street, Blue Hills Road, or Lincoln Avenue from Route 9 (alternative 4).

The committee does recommend installation of permanent traffic calming humps on Lincoln Avenue (alternative 5).

Furthermore, the committee requests that the draft traffic management policy currently being assembled by town staff be reviewed by appropriate individuals and committees and "transmitted expeditiously to the Select Board" for approval.

The precise wording and vote of the committee's recommendations follows, along with a brief description of the committee's reasoning. Further discussion may be found in the draft minutes of the meeting, enclosed with this letter as an attachment.

(1) "That the draft town-wide policy on traffic management that is currently nearing completion by Mr. Mooring be brought forward for review by this Committee, town staff, and interested Town residents"; and (2) "That a final version of a town-wide traffic management policy be transmitted expeditiously to the Select Board for their approval." The committee understands that this document will be ready by late October and considers it an important element of future discussion of traffic calming issues. Both motions were approved by a vote of 5-0.

(3) "That in the absence of a town-wide traffic management policy, the Committee cannot recommend either of the partial street closure plans outlined in Mr. Shaffer's letter of August 4." Since traffic management decisions will depend, in part, on the classification of roads by their relative importance for travel, for emergency access, and as bus routes, the committee's vote reflects a reluctance to proceed with proposals having potentially dramatic impact before a traffic management policy document has been accepted. This motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

(4) "That the town <u>not</u> proceed with an investigation into eliminating truck traffic on Lincoln and Sunset Avenues because an earlier traffic study determined that heavy commercial truck traffic is less than the state-mandated 5% minimum required for taking such action." The committee considers the data

collected in previous studies sufficient indication that mandatory truck traffic volume minimums will not be met in potential future studies and therefore recommends against the expense and effort of pursuing this action. This motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

(5) "That the town not pursue the installation of "No Left Turn" signs on Dana, Blue Hills, or Lincoln as these would prove highly inconvenient." The committee believes that this action would unfairly inconvenience residents of those streets while not adequately addressing the source of the problem, which is a lack of opportunity and incentive for westbound drivers on Route 9 to make a left-hand turn onto Route 116 or University Drive in order to access the University. This motion was approved by a vote of 4-0, with one abstention reflecting a reluctance to categorically write off a potential option in the absence of a town-wide traffic management policy.

(6) "That a set of four permanent speed humps be installed in Lincoln Avenue in the Spring of 2009." The committee's recommendation is for a raised device that extends continuously across the width of the street (allowing for bicycle lanes on either end), so as to eliminate the dangerous "pass-through" that was possible during the experiment with temporary "cushions". Neighborhood residents agreed with the results of data collected during the experiment that showed a reduction in overall speed when the cushions were in place. The committee's recommendation calls for an additional hump compared to the number of cushions deployed in the experiment, for a total of four. This motion was approved by a vote of 4-0, with one abstention reflecting a concern that the recommendation does not adequately provide for safe bicycle passage in the areas of the proposed speed humps.

(7) "That the town not pursue any of the various "one-way loop" ideas that have been proposed due to their inconvenience to some residents and the potential encouragement of dangerous driving behaviors." This motion was approved by a vote of 4-1, the vote against reflecting insufficient evidence of the claims of inconvenience and danger listed in the motion and reluctance to categorically write off a potential option in the absence of a town-wide traffic management policy.

Please let the committee know if you would like further clarification of its response, and thank you for your attention to this issue.

For the Public Works Committee,

Robert J Crowner, chair

Draft Minutes, Public Works Committee
Meeting Tuesday, September 9, 7:00

Attending: Rob Crowner (Chair), Steve Braun, Don George, Charlie Moran, Vince O'Connor; Guilford Mooring Superintendent; Andrew Melnechuk, Public Transportation Committee; Stephanie O'Keefe, Select Board.

1. Administrative:

a. Minutes of August 5, 2008: Moved to accept. **Voted: 5-0** (unanimous)

b. Next scheduled meeting: October 7, 7:00.

2. Old Business:

a. Lincoln Avenue traffic calming proposals

Steve Braun brought a draft with eight proposed motions that responded to the Town Manager's August 4 request for PWC recommendations to the Select Board for traffic management on Lincoln and Sunset Avenues and Fearing Street.

Vince O'Connor asked when the Town's draft Traffic Management Policy will be ready. Guilford Mooring responded: late October. This draft will list every road in town. Roads will be classified as they have been in earlier reports: major and minor arterials, major and minor collectors, major and minor local. But, in addition, all roadways will be classified on the basis of their relative importance to emergency responders (i.e. fire and ambulance). In addition, bus routes will be identified. These factors are relevant because traffic management techniques vary with road classification. For example, installation of devices that cause a vertical displacement of vehicles are generally not appropriate for roads designated as primary emergency vehicle response routes.

Moved: That the draft town-wide policy on traffic management that is currently nearing completion by Mr. Mooring be brought forward for review by this Committee, town staff, and interested Town residents. Approved: 5-0.

Moved: That a final version of a town-wide traffic management policy be transmitted expeditiously to the Select Board for their approval. Approved: 5-0.

The Committee discussed the proposals for partial street closure outlined in the Town Manager's letter of August 4. These proposals would create partial closures at the intersections of Sunset Avenue and Fearing Street, and Lincoln Avenue and Fearing Street, making it impossible for northbound traffic to access the University.

Moved: That in the absence of a town-wide traffic management policy, the Committee cannot recommend either of the partial street closure plans outlined in Mr. Shaffer's letter of August 4. Approved: 5-0

The Committee discussed a proposal for eliminating heavy commercial truck traffic from Lincoln Avenue. After review, it was clear to the Committee that the proposal would be expensive to research and not effective, given that heavy truck traffic on Lincoln has not, in earlier surveys, risen to the state-mandated 5% that is required before a town or municipality can take action to prohibit such traffic.

Moved: That the Town <u>not</u> proceed with an investigation into eliminating truck traffic on Lincoln and Sunset avenues because an earlier traffic study determined that heavy commercial truck traffic is less than the state-mandated 5% minimum required for taking such action. Approved: 5-0

The Committee discussed the proposal to prohibit left turns for eastbound Rt. 9 traffic onto Blue Hills Road, Dana Street, and Lincoln Avenue. There was general agreement that this would be ineffective in its aim (reduce northbound traffic on Lincoln) and would create inconvenience for residents of the neighborhoods on Blue Hills, Dana, and the southern half of Lincoln. Further, this action would not address the root problem, which is too-short stacking-lanes on Route 9 for eastbound travelers wanting to turn left to the University on 116 and University Drive. Mr. Mooring noted that the lengthening of these stacking lanes is still a possibility since they would be part of the proposed "Big WalMart" project.

Moved: That the town <u>not</u> pursue the installation of "No Left Turn" signs on Dana, Blue Hills, or Lincoln as these would prove highly inconvenient Approved: 4-0-1.

The Committee discussed last fall's experiment with temporary "speed cushions" on Lincoln Avenue: their shape, placement. Mr. Braun presented the results of a neighborhood survey which showed support for the cushions, as well as strong support for the elimination of the "pass-through" cuts, which were routinely used by motorists to avoid the humps. Since such avoidance involves crossing the centerline of the road, this was seen as dangerous. Speed-control devices which have the same general dimensions of the "cushions" (i.e. wide, with tapered edged) but *without* the cut-through are called "speed humps." Such "speed humps" allow ample room on either end for both drainage and easy passage for bicyclists. After the discussion it was

Moved: That a set of four permanent speed humps be installed on Lincoln Avenue in the spring of 2009. Approved: 4-0-1

And, after a short discussion, it was

Moved: That the Town <u>not</u> pursue any of the various "one-way loop" ideas that have been proposed due to their inconvenience to some residents and the potential encouragement of dangerous driving behaviors. Approved: 4-01

b. Road Repair Subcommittee report--not yet ready. Mr. Mooring is overseeing the development of a fine-grained assessment of all relevant town roadways. This assessment will be the basis for the sub-committee's recommendations for additional funding in coming years for street repairs. The next subcommittee meeting is set for Thursday 8:30 Oct. 2.

c. Updates:

East Leverett Road bridge--almost ready to take down the forms. Vince reports that bridge deck is in place. Open soon.

Parking on Cottage St.--meeting 7:00 pm Sept 17th--public meeting sponsored by the DPW . Goal is to determine which side to do no parking. Chestnut, High, Taylor. Vince O'Connor asks that the meeting be posted so that PWC members can go to listen without violating open meeting laws.

North Pleasant: sidewalks good, resurfacing going well.

Concerns were raised about the bike lane on the repaved North Pleasant. Curb juts in, but the lane is still 4' wide. It is suggested that Committee members visit this site.

3. New business:

Parking Orientation near Food for Thought bookstore. The Town Manager had asked the Committee to re-consider its vote against the creation of diagonal parking in this area. The Committee had earlier voted against this proposal because of the anticipated hazard posed to bicyclists of drivers backing out of such spaces. Discussion of this matter was postponed to the next meeting. Rob Crowner will ask the Town Manager for a proposal and rationale.

4. Announcements: Stephen Puffer decided not to be reappointed. Moved but not voted: That PWC thanks Mr. Puffer for his many years of service on the PWC. Vince will get card.

Vince O'Connor asks that planning for bus pull-offs on Main Street be started now, to allow time for needed right-of-way land acquisition. Through Andrew Melnechuk, the Committee asked the Public Transportation Committee to look into this as well as PWC.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlie Moran, Sec'y *pro tem.*