

AN OPEN LETTER TO MAYORS MANCINI AND LARSON

Mayor Mancini of Long Beach Township and Mayor Larson of Barnegat Light, we are publishing this letter in an attempt to establish a dialogue with each of you with regards to the safety of Long Beach Boulevard. As our previous attempts in private calls and letters have not resulted in such a dialogue, we publicly invite you to an open conversation about the changes in the traffic lanes in Harvey Cedars. As you are aware, the current lane configuration in our town does not offer road shoulders that meet safety standards, as the shoulders are far too narrow for safe recreational activity. Someone will eventually be seriously injured or killed by a car driving through Harvey Cedars, perhaps driven by one of your townspeople. The sheer tragedy of such an event would make victims of everyone involved: whomever is struck by a car; the unfortunate driver; and those who could have prevented the tragedy but chose not to.

Mayor Mancini, after reading the July 15, 2011 article in the Asbury Park Press in which you state you are considering closing Ocean Boulevard to vehicular traffic in Long Beach Township "in order to make it safer," it appears that you understand the issue of less-than-adequate shoulders, pedestrians, and traffic. We hope we can discuss the similarities in our situations, and our desires to make things safer for all.

The necessity to widen the shoulders of the boulevard, for the safety of everyone who walks, jogs, drives, bikes, pushes a baby carriage or in any way uses Long Beach Boulevard is not a matter of opinion. As you know, Ocean County hired a professional engineering firm to study the road and propose a solution. Though the facts of this Stantec engineering study have since been twisted by political pressure, the study showed that the safest configuration would be to have one lane in each direction with a center lane for turns. This would allow the shoulders to at least be the minimum recommended width. So, a study was performed, the results announced, and the best possible solution established. According to Freeholder Jack Kelly, the Ocean County Director of Law &B Public Safety, the only thing holding up implementing the safest road configuration is your blessing. The Freeholders, as you know, have said that they will not institute the change for Harvey Cedars unless each of you agrees to it.

There is no sense debating the fairness of other towns dictating what happens to Harvey Cedars. We recognize the current reality: the boulevard will not be made as safe as possible unless you agree. This may not always be true, but apparently it is for now. We have heard the arguments against the changes: It could, at times, take 28 seconds longer to get through Harvey Cedars; it may slow emergency vehicles; it might impact island evacuation. Frankly, these "arguments" are not sound, especially when measured against the constant unsafe conditions that now exist. The one argument perhaps worthy of pause - the slowing emergency vehicles - is especially misleading. Emergency vehicles move past traffic as fast as possible regardless of lane configuration, and as we all know, the proposed configuration works effectively in many areas of New Jersey and across the country.

Again, we stress – it is the Stantec experts hired by Ocean County that recommended these changes. We are just citizens who are concerned with the safety of not only our residents and the visitors to our town, but also for the safety of everyone who lives, works, or vacations in any of the towns on our beautiful island.

So, what to do next? Letting the matter drop is not an option for us. We are open to discussing with you ways to alleviate your concerns and the concerns of your constituents. We are especially interested in finding ways to educate the public about the study that was performed. We believe that when people

actually see the study results, the computer simulation, and the professional recommendations, they would agree with the experts: changing the lane configuration in Harvey Cedars would create a safer roadway for all. So, please, we ask that you reach out to us, directly or through our Mayor, and let us work together before it is too late.

Too often we have heard public officials say, after a tragedy "Let us make whatever changes we have to so that this never happens again."

We are asking you to have the courage now, before someone is killed, to say "Let us make whatever changes we have to so that this never happens."

You can contact me at president@harveycedarstax.org.

Respectfully,

Bryan Lewis, President
The Harvey Cedars Taxpayers Association