



RYE POLICE DEPARTMENT

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To: Rye Board of Selectmen
From: Chief Kevin Walsh *KW*
Date: August 25, 2017
Re: Dow Lane

On or about 08/14/17, Jenny Sears (Rye resident) gave me a letter addressed to the Rye Board of Selectmen. The letter is a signed petition, requesting the Board of Selectmen to make Dow Lane a dead-end street. Jenny Sears and I have had conversations by phone, in person and by e-mail about the motor vehicle traffic driving too fast on Dow Lane, for approximately the last two years. The Sears family lives at 6 Dow Lane, the house closest to the stop sign at the corner of Dow Lane and Washington Road. Rye Highway records show that in 1809, the Town of Rye voted to build through James Dow's land to the North Hampton line, which is now known as Dow Lane. Dow Lane is a main entrance and exit to the Town of Rye.

Dow Lane has been a 30 MPH zone since I have been employed as a Rye Police Officer (approximately 22 years). There are two speed limit signs posted. One sign is near the Swist residence, 9 Down Lane, for vehicles traveling south or out of Rye towards North Hampton. The other speed limit sign is at the last property, which is owned by Connecting Realty LLC (56 Dow Lane). That sign is for vehicles traveling north, off of Route 1 (Lafayette Road) into Rye. There is a "No through trucks. Local delivery only" sign below the 30 MPH speed limit sign. There is a "Stop Sign Ahead" warning sign at or near the Sears home (6 Dow Lane) and a "Stop" sign at Dow Lane and Washington Road with a "stop" line bar painted on the road surface. This is for vehicles traveling north on Dow Lane. There is a "Dangerous Intersection" sign at 39 Dow Lane, a "Stop Sign Ahead" sign approximately 25 yards away from the "Dangerous Intersection" and a "Stop" sign at Dow Lane and Lafayette Road. The "Stop" sign is for vehicles traveling south on Dow Lane.

During the weeks of June 9, 2016 to June 23, 2016 (2 weeks), Rye Police used the traffic counter on the message board to collect information on Dow Lane. The data was similar both weeks, with the same average speeds. The following information was collected:

- Total vehicles: 27,925
- Inbound: 16,882
- Outbound: 11,043
- Average speed: **37MPH**
- | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 9% | 18% | 37% | 26% | 8% |
| <30MPH | 30-34MPH | 35-39MPH | 40-44MPH | 45+MPH |
- Weekdays averaged 2,152 cars/day
- Weekends have 30% less traffic than weekdays
- Sundays have 40% less traffic than weekdays
- Weekdays 7a-7p average- 146 cars/hour

The total vehicles, in the two recorded weeks, were 27,925. Weekdays averaged 2,152 cars per day, which shows that Dow Lane is used as an entrance and exit to Rye.

Rye Police Officers used this data and planned directed speed enforcement patrols on Dow Lane. In 2016, there were two motor vehicle accidents reported at Washington Road and Dow Lane. Officers issued 43 warnings and 9 tickets for motor vehicle violations on Dow Lane and or near the Washington Road/Dow Lane intersection.

On 08/16/17, Officer Lynch documented a directed patrol during the hours of 11:00 AM and 11:30 AM.

- 9 vehicles 25–29 MPH
- 17 vehicles 30-33 MPH
- 21 vehicles 34-37 MPH
- 4 vehicles 38-40 MPH

The directed patrol on 08/16/2017 shows similar data that was taken during June of 2016. The average speed of vehicles traveling Dow Lane was between 35 MPH to 39 MPH (37%); 34 MPH -37 MPH (21 vehicles) and 35 MPH -40 MPH.

The goal of the Rye Police is to get the average speed of vehicles traveling on Dow Lane to be at 30 MPH. In addition to Rye Officers running radar on Dow Lane and the surrounding neighborhoods, the department has been exchanging ideas with the Rye Highway Department, the neighbors who live on Dow Lane, other Town of Rye employees and the Rye Highway Safety Committee.

In August of 2017, the Rye Highway Department changed the size of the 30 MPH speed limit sign at 56 Dow Lane to a larger sign (24"x 30" sign). Paul Paradis had the sign location moved closer to the Route 1 (Lafayette Rd) intersection. Paul Paradis and I measured the travel lane on Dow Lane. The purpose was to make sure the width of the travel lanes was the same as all roads in Rye, not wider. Both lanes measured approximately 10 feet wide, the same as other Rye roads.

As the result of meetings and discussions mentioned above, the police team proposed a tangible idea to put an orange border around both 30 MPH speed limit signs to make them stand out. The police team realizes this will only work temporarily because after time, the orange becomes part of the background and drivers will not be as aware. They will become accustomed to seeing the orange border.

The Rye Police have been talking to the Swist family to see if they would be open to clearing the trees and brush at the corner of their property (9 Dow Lane, the corner of Dow Lane at Washington Road). The purpose would be to provide better visibility to drivers stopped at the stop sign, allowing them to see vehicles traveling east on Washington Road, towards Dow Lane. Given the amount of vegetation in the area, drivers do need to travel up to and over the stop line bar in order to see the whole Washington Road east bound travel lane. Cutting back the vegetation would hopefully alleviate the rolling stops that residents have been complaining about.

On 8/24/2017, I spoke to Joe Warner, the manager of the BMW Motorcycle Dealership business located on Lafayette Road (Route 1) in North Hampton. The purpose of the visit was to confirm that they have a standard route that road technicians follow to determine mechanical problems with motorcycles. Their route starts on Dow Lane. He confirmed that all employees know the speed limit is 30 MPH and said if there are any problems, he wants to be informed in order to keep great relations with the neighborhoods.

A long-term idea brought up is to ask the Rye Highway Director to present a new stop sign intersection plan for Dow Lane at Washington Road when Dow Lane is on the list to be repaved. The Rye Highway Safety Committee discussed having the intersection of Dow Lane at Washington Road being changed from the curved "T" intersection to a straight "T" intersection. This would force drivers to make a complete stop at the stop sign and then make a sharp right turn instead of a gradual curve turn. This design (a straight "T" intersection) would slow vehicles down.

Rye Police will be putting the message board back out on Dow Lane to do another traffic count in September, 2017. The police team wants to review the 2016 and 2017 data to plan their patrol shifts and times for most frequent speed violations. They are curious if the warnings issued to drivers work or if the police team needs to take a different approach.

Based upon the research conducted by the different town departments, I am not in favor of making Dow Lane a "dead end" street. I do not feel that it is in the best interest of the town or the townspeople to make Dow Lane a "dead end" street. The police officers and I are listening to our residents and want to make every neighborhood as safe as we can.

Cc: Town Administrator Michael Magnant
Rye Highway Director Dennis McCarthy
Fire Chief Tom Lambert
Rye Planning and Zoning Kim Reed
Jenny Sears
Rye Police Officers