

# Walworth residents: Keep Hamlin Street, path

Village Board refers matter to plan commission

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Abandoning a walking path along with Hamlin Street was a hot-button topic for those at the March 10 Village of Walworth Board meeting.

The comments section of the meeting revolved around the abandonment of the path, which is at the end of the unmarked Hamlin Street across from Walworth School. The path goes down Fremont Street and extends into a Walworth Prairie neighborhood development.

No one who spoke March 10 supported the abandonment of the street or the path. Due to the many concerns and frustrations from residents, the board referred it to the village planning commission.

"I have been a member of Immanuel United Church of Christ since 1975," Village of Walworth resident Gary Ruskell said. "If you were to abandon Hamlin Street, then you'd be taking away our street access to the church property from the south."

Once a road is established as a public thoroughfare, its public



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A walking path extends from the unmarked Hamlin Street in the Village of Walworth.

status continues until the road is discontinued or abandoned. Abandonment occurs when there is a sufficient period of nonuse by the public coupled with an intent to abandon the road.

Joyce Pagel, a former member of the Walworth County Planning Commission for 42 years, was highly against the abandonment of the walking trail due to the many years they devoted to creating such paths.

"We worked for years to get walking paths and bike paths through the village," she said. "The one by Hamlin Street has

been there for several years now and I use it. I have seen other people use it and I would hate to see it be abandoned. Once you have something, why would you want to abandon it? It makes no sense to me."

Maryanne Abell, a moderator on behalf of Immanuel United Church of Christ, said she spoke with the majority of church members and all opposed the abandonment of Hamlin Street as well as the walking path.

"You can't discontinue the street," Village of Walworth resident David Rasmussen said. "The

open space is going to be there for people to go through and they're probably going to start using it unless you choose to gate it or mark it for no trespassing, which sounds rather silly as a way of determining whether or not this walking path that was created along with many other paths over a long period of time should be abandoned or discontinued."

Rasmussen added that he would never support the abandonment of the path just because it has some problems with its use.

"If there is a safety concern with respect to that particular right of way, possibly the suggestion of a sidewalk would be appropriate so the children would have a safe path to go down Hamlin Street after they get off the walking path," he said. "I can think of nothing less progressive than for the Village to take out something so useful."

Following the many public comments that were made, Village of Walworth President Louise Czaja and the board of trustees approved a motion to hold off on a decision.

"We need to refer it back to the planning commission for a further look and taking into account the concerns by the members of the IUCC," Czaja said.

On March 21, the planning commission discussed the issue but took no action.

# Calming stormy waters

New policy in Linn aims to improve boat launch behavior

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Following past abuse of staff and patrons at its boat launch facilities, Town of Linn supervisors will implement a new policy to promote citizenship and good behavior.

The March 14 approval came on a split 3-1 vote, with supervisor Kathy Leith dissenting.

"The boat launch attendants were being abused verbally and there was some physical jostling that I witnessed," explained supervisor Maureen Zimmerman. "I thought we'd put it into policy form — what is and is not acceptable behavior by the public."

The one-page policy, written by town administrator Jim Hurley, spells that out.

"The town supports the right of staff and all patrons to use boat launch facilities without discrimination, intimidation, threat of harm, or invasion of privacy," the policy states. "The town is dedicated to providing friendly, courteous, and respectful service and an enjoyable, clean, safe, and comfortable environment for all users."

Policy guidelines, "developed to help make boat launching in the town safe and pleasant for all users," include expectations that boat launch users shall:

- Show respect to all and take direction from boat launch attendants.
- Show respect for equipment, supplies and facilities.
- Refrain from harassing or abusing patrons or launch attendants physically or verbally.
- Refrain from using offensive, abusive or threatening language, behavior or gestures.

In board discussions, Zimmerman said failure by the town to address the boat launch behavior issues could have negative effect on its Geneva Lake launch operations, whether it's retaining existing or hiring new boat launch attendants or retaining existing or attracting new boat launch patrons.

"They're not going to be verbally abused, they're not going to be threatened," she said.

Under the policy, any criminal acts, including threatening or physical abuse, may result in arrest and prosecution to the full extent of the law by the Town of Linn Police Department.

For all other violations, launch attendants shall reserve the right to issue a written warning to offenders. Records of the incident are to be made available to the town clerk, harbor commission and, if necessary, the Linn Police Department.

A second violation within a 12-month period shall result in a suspension of 12 months from the date of the incident. If the violator is observed at a town launch facility with the suspension period, the police will be called and the 12-month suspension period will restart from the date of the incident.

Under the policy, violators may appeal suspensions to the harbor commission by filing a written request with the town clerk. The decision of the harbor commission shall be final.

"It's common sense," said supervisor Alex Palmer of the boat launch behavior policy. "Obviously, people should be respectful."

## Annual meeting

In other news, town administrator Jim Hurley announced that the town's 2022 annual meeting is scheduled for April 19 at 7 p.m. at Linn Town Hall, 3728 Franklin Walsh St. in Zenda.

Hurley noted that it is required that online attendees pre-register with the town office.

The agenda is posted online at townoflinn.com.

## TOWN OF LINN

# Nightmare on Elm Street nears end

Linn supervisors approve razing of three blighted properties

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A long-running nightmare on Elm Street for Town of Linn supervisors and residents is nearing an end.

The Linn Town Board cast a unanimous March 14 vote approving an agreement with Burlington-based firm RLP Diversified, Inc. for asbestos abatement and demolition of three adjacent blighted properties on Elm Street.

"The properties came to our attention about two years ago," town chairman James Weiss noted. "Once they were brought to our attention, we took action and, working through the court system, it takes time."

Weiss said the town has been working to obtain approval to raze the buildings at N1718, N1712 and N1708 Elm St.

"This has been a long time coming with a very complicated and convoluted set of properties due to deceased individuals and bank-owned properties," said Weiss.

The board unanimously denied a request from 30-year town resident Brett Slansky, who purchased the foreclosed, bank-owned property at N1718 Elm on March 2. Slansky wanted to raze the property with a company of his own choosing.

In discussions, board sentiment was for staying the course with the RLP Diversified bid package. Weiss estimated the project will cost around \$50,000.

"We've worked for about two years to get this together as a packet," Weiss said. "It hasn't been a mystery that all three of these properties were gonna be razed and that we were putting a packet together in an effort to raze all of them."

Supervisor Jim Livingston shared concerns about deviating from the plan to have RLP Diversified perform the work.

"I'm concerned about this property owner following all of the specifications," he said. "We went into a lot of detail about asbestos content, dry wells on site, water wells that have to be capped, septic systems that have to be taken care of. Someone just offering to raze it on their own, it doesn't say that all of that's gonna be taken care of."

Livingston also expressed concerns about the possible impacts of stripping one of the properties out of the RLP Diversified bid.

"I would also be concerned that our successful bidder could retract his bid because he doesn't have all the work anymore," Livingston said, with Weiss noting a change in scope would require a rebidding of the project.

Supervisor Kathy Leith expressed concerns about the timeline for razing the property



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The Linn Town Board on March 14 approved a bid from Burlington-based RLP Diversified, Inc. for asbestos abatement and demolition of three adjacent blighted properties at N1718 Elm St. (pictured), and N1712 and N1708 Elm Street.



acquired by Slansky at N1718 Elm St.

"He doesn't have a timeline for getting this completed," she said. "I don't know how quickly he could get his affairs in order to handle this in a timely manner. I think he'd be hard pressed to get it done as quickly as we would like to have it done."

Supervisor Maureen Zimmerman indicated her preference for keeping the scope of RLP Diversified asbestos abatement and razing bid intact, saying it was unknown whether Slansky might run into "difficulties" in the razing process.

"Keep it as a package," she said. "We worked very hard on it."

Town administrator Jim Hurley noted the RLP Diversified contract also included provisions for site restoration encompassing all three properties — backfilling to the existing grade and property slope, laying three inches of top-soil and grass seeding.

RLP Diversified will subcontract the asbestos abatement work to Berlin-based Wisconsin Asbestos Removal and Demolition.

The costs for asbestos abatement and razing will be assessed to the affected property owners.

## New fire/EMS officers

Also on March 14, Linn Fire

Chief Pete Jones introduced the fire and EMS department's new officers — deputy chief Kim Pillman, second assistant chief Grant Winger, fire captain Jim Morris, water rescue captain Cody Pillman and EMS captain Ryan Jolly.

"Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen," Weiss told the officers. "We do appreciate everything you do for us."

## Other news

In other developments at March 14 board meeting, Linn town supervisors:

- Awarded acceptance of a bid from Payne & Dolan at a cost not to exceed \$634,205 for road surfacing work on Fair Oaks Road, Wooddale Drive, Springbrook Road, Wildwood Road, Linden Road, Orchard Road, Old Farm, Hill Road, Forest Street, Black Point Road and Summit Road, and subdivision patching on Wooddale Drive and Fair Oaks Road.
- Awarded acceptance of a road crack fill and sealing bid from Farhner Asphalt Sealers, LLC at a cost not to exceed \$125,795.
- Approved a 6% increase in boat slip fees for 2022, which rise to \$24,407 for medium slips and \$36,090 for large slips.
- Approved a renewal 1,100-ton contract with Overland Park, Kansas-based Compass Minerals America, Inc. for 2022-23

road salt — straight rock salt and treated salt priced at \$81.28 per ton and \$110 per ton respectively.

■ Approved the issuance of pier permits for N1507 Chicago Club, W4632 Basswood, W2865 Swinghurst Lane, W3328 Burr Oak and W3594 Maple Lane.

■ On a split 3-1 vote, with supervisor Maureen Zimmerman dissenting, approved a special event request from Brookfield-based Peak Performance Professionals for the Sept. 17 Fontana Triathlon on Geneva Lake. The triathlon, which takes place in Fontana, Walworth, Williams Bay and the Town of Linn, is expected to draw 550, about half of which will be doing the full bike course in Linn.

■ Approved \$4,087 in emergency management purchases of traffic cones, barricades and signs from Madison-based Decker Supply Co.

■ Approved a planned spring prescribed burn by Milton-based Tallgrass Restoration, LLC at the Town of Linn Nature Park, at a cost not to exceed \$11,730.

■ Took no action on a parking plan submitted by Jose Hernandez for Zenda Tap, N560 Zenda Rd.

■ Scheduled an April 25 public hearing for a Meadowview Estates petition requesting that the Town of Linn adopt roads within the subdivision.

■ Took no action on a proposed amendment of the town's docking facility rental ordinance.

■ Took no action on a proposed revised boat slip lease.

■ Held first readings, waived second readings and approved amendments to the town's Pier Revocation of Permits, Boat Launching and Room Tax ordinances.

■ At the recommendation of public accounting and consulting firm Baker Tilly, approved creation of a separate fund to segregate federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies from the town's general fund. In June, the Town of Linn will receive \$125,759 in ARPA funds, with a similar amount received in fiscal 2021. To date, no ARPA funds have been allocated or expended by the town.