

THE TOWNSHIP OF MIDDLETOWN

Township Hall, 1 King's Highway
Middletown, NJ 07748-2594

ROSEMARIE D. PETERS
Mayor

RICK BRODSKY
Deputy Mayor

RAYMOND J. O'GRADY
Committee Member

PATRICK W. PARKINSON
Committee Member

JOAN A. SMITH
Committee Member



Organized December 14, 1667
"Pride in Middletown"

JOSEPH P. LE...
Township Administrator

ROSA GARCIA, P...
Township Clerk

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July 17, 2000

The Honorable Harry Larrison, Director,
and Members of the Board of Chosen Freeholders
Hall of Records
Freehold, NJ 07728

Dear Freeholders:

My fellow Committeewoman, Joan Smith, and I recently attended a meeting in the Lincroft section of Middletown, which was held on behalf of a new neighborhood task force our Township Committee has formed in order to generate and implement suggestions for improving the area. The original impetus for setting up the group was to solicit ideas for beautifying the commercial area of Lincroft, utilizing funding for that purpose which had been obtained for us by Senator Joe Kyrillos. The 75-or-more people who attended the meeting, however, were much more interested in talking about traffic and pedestrian safety along Newman Springs Road (County Route 520).

At least half of the attendees were residents of Luftman Towers, a senior citizen building on Hurley's Lane, right behind the Acme shopping center. There are about 250 units in the building. The seniors complained of difficulty crossing Rt. 520 at Hurley's Lane in the time allowed for the pedestrian cycle of the light there. Their concerns were echoed by many other residents, of much younger ages, who said it is difficult for anyone, regardless of their age or level of agility, to walk or bike in the Lincroft Village shopping area, because it is currently designed to serve cars, not people.

The County Engineer's office had very kindly sent a representative to speak at the meeting; he was accompanied by someone from Orth-Rogers, which is currently conducting a traffic study for the county of the Rt. 520 corridor through Lincroft. The concern of the residents, which they expressed to these gentlemen, is that the study will be focussed exclusively on finding a way to get more cars through the Lincroft corridor more efficiently (that is, faster), with no attention being devoted to the problems all this traffic movement creates for the residents of an area which is still functioning as a village.

To expand on this a bit, Lincroft is a unique area within Middletown in that it offers its residents, within a few-block area, almost all of the essential services and institutions needed in our daily lives. It has two schools, a church, a post office, a branch library, a supermarket, several banks, a pharmacy, and a variety of shops, restaurants, and professional offices. People in the area like the fact that they and their children can walk or bike to many of these places. Many of them don't take advantage of this, however, because Lincroft village is bisected by Rt. 520, and they have found that the functioning of the traffic signals in the area make crossing 520 a real challenge for pedestrians.

One day last week, Joan Smith and I decided to see for ourselves what they were talking about. We went out there around noon one day, with a stop watch and a pad and pencil, to check the pedestrian cycles at Hurley's Lane and Rt. 520, which the seniors complained about, and at Middletown-Lincroft/Swimming River Road and 520, which is even more challenging. We found that the pedestrian cycle at Hurley's Lane crossing 520 was 10 seconds on Walk and 20 seconds on blinking Don't Walk, for a total of 30 seconds. This was adequate for us to cross, since we can both still move when we have to, but it probably is too short a time for some of the seniors. The thing that was most disconcerting, though, was that the Walk changed to blinking Don't Walk very quickly, and it's hard for a pedestrian to know how long Don't Walk will continue to blink before changing to full Don't Walk, at which point the motorists on 520 will be getting a green light and will be eager to take off.

At 520 and Middletown-Lincroft/Swimming River Road, the situation was even more daunting. Crossing 520 from the bank to the Exxon station, the walk cycle was 8 seconds long (which got us just into the second traffic lane) and the blinking Don't Walk was 17 seconds long, for a total of 25 seconds. Crossing Swimming River Road from the Exxon station to the Amoco station had the 10 second/20 second cycle -- longer than the cycle for crossing more lanes of traffic on 520! We also discovered on looking back across Swimming River Road from the Amoco station to the Exxon station that the pedestrian signal was out, so you were on your own for that one. We then tried to cross 520 from the Amoco station to the Lincroft Inn, but finally gave up after five minutes of pressing and repressing the button and failing to get the pedestrian cycle to activate at all, even after several full cycles of the traffic signals in all directions had been completed.

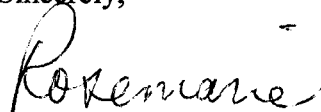
We passed this information along to our Police Department, which sent an officer out there to check the situation and try to remedy whatever he could. We wanted to communicate this information directly to you, however, because we're hoping that you will factor the needs of the residents of Lincroft, who wish to walk and bike through their village center, into the study that Orth-Rogers is performing for you. Our fear is that the study will focus exclusively on moving the largest number of cars possible through the area, with the end result being even more danger and difficulty for area residents who prefer to leave their cars at home when they run their local errands.

We hope that the study will treat the village area of Lincroft as something other than a standard traffic corridor, and will attempt to slow the traffic as it goes through

there, allowing for safer pedestrian crossing and a generally calmer atmosphere. It is not unusual in other states for traffic, even on 50 mph four-lane highways, to have the speed limit dropped to 35 when it passes through a town. Route 13 going down the Delmarva Peninsula is a good example, where the speed limit decreases every time it goes through a town center, then increases again when you leave the center. Perhaps something like that could be considered for Lincroft center. It may take a driver a few extra minutes to get through Lincroft, but so what! We obviously feel that there needs to be a balance struck between the interests of motorists and those of residents, walkers, and bikers.

We sincerely hope that you will take this information into account as your study of the Route 520 corridor through Lincroft proceeds. Of course, we would be happy to speak with any of you about this at any time. We appreciate the many things that you have done for Middletown over the years, and want to offer our help to you on this project in the interest of seeing the best possible result for our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemarie".

Rosemarie D. Peters
Mayor

cc: Township Committee
Robert Czech, Twp. Admin.
John Pollinger, Chief of Police
Anthony Mercantante, Planning Dir.
Robert Collins, County Admin.
Ted Giannichini, County Engineer