

**Rye Perkins Road Safety Committee
Report to Rye Board of Selectmen
April 18, 2019**

Dear Selectmen:

The Rye Perkins Road Safety Committee (“Committee”), a committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen, has held eight (8) public meetings since February 19, 2019 to discuss and review residents’ safety concerns on Perkins Road which were brought to the Board of Selectmen’s attention.

The Board of Selectmen’s full charge to the Committee is included as **Attachment A** to this report. In summary, the Committee was charged with the following:

- Become familiar with Perkins Road and the residents’ safety concerns.
- Hold public meetings as necessary to receive residents’ input and observations, develop recommendations and suggestions to the Board of Selectmen in order to make Perkins Road safer.
- Produce and present a final report to the Board of Selectmen by April 30, 2019.

Committee members include voting members, John Bellino, Mary Westover, Karin Nelson, Doug Abrahams and Gregg Mikolaities. Non-voting members include Selectmen Keriann Roman, Rye Police Chief Kevin Walsh, and Steve Hilman, Beach Committee.

Based on the charge given the Committee, we are pleased to provide this report to the Rye Board of Selectmen.

Since the Committee’s kick off meeting on February 19, 2019 the committee has completed the following tasks:

- Held eight (8) meetings as a Committee. All meetings were properly posted and open to the public. The meetings included regular attendance from interested residents, property and business owners in the Perkins Road area. Meeting minutes are included as **Attachment B** to this report.
- Reviewed the Rye Beach Committee’s Annual Reports from 2014 through 2018.
- Reviewed the January 2015 Tighe & Bond Ocean Boulevard Parking Assessment Study.
- Reviewed the Rye Parking Ordinance.
- Police Chief Walsh met with the area New Hampshire State Park Manager to discuss traffic flow and parking at the Jenness Beach State Park.
- Committee member Gregg Mikolaities met on site, on Perkins Road and at the Perkins Road / Ocean Boulevard intersection, with Police Chief Kevin Walsh and Public Works Director Dennis McCarthy.
- Police Chief Walsh met with the property owner of 2281 and the business owners to discuss observations of traffic flow in and out of the property.

Background

Perkins Road is a residential street that connects on the east to Route 1A/Ocean Boulevard and to Central Road on the west. The roadway from Route 1A/Ocean Boulevard to Big Rock Road has a paved width of 21 +/- feet, located within a 50 feet town right of way. The north side of this section of Perkins Road is marked and signed "No Parking". The south side of this section of Perkins Road is marked and signed "No Parking", except for a section of the roadway spanning from the 2281 Ocean Boulevard rear parking lot entrance to the posted "No Parking" sign east of Bernard Road. This noted section of Perkins Road presently accommodates approximately up to 21 cars.

The residents and visitors on Perkins Road are impacted during the summer months by vehicular and pedestrian traffic generated as a result of the very popular Jenness Beach State Park, the businesses located at 2281 Ocean Boulevard and a 150-car private parking lot located at the rear of 2281 Ocean Boulevard, which provides additional parking for visitors to the Jenness Beach State Park.

Safety Concerns, Observations and Existing Conditions

The Committee's process started with discussions during the first five (5) meetings regarding the safety concerns and observations by area residents, along with the Beach Committee and the Rye Police Department. The discussions were focused on the section of Perkins Road from Route 1A (Ocean Boulevard) to the Big Rock Road intersection. The safety concerns have increased over the last decade due to the escalation of visitors to the Jenness Beach area and the resulting escalation of vehicular traffic on Perkins Road. The combination of voluminous vehicular traffic traveling east and west on Perkins Road, pedestrians (with wagons, strollers, children in tow) traveling east and west on Perkins Road, bicyclists and the off pavement parking on Perkins Road (located on the south side of Perkins Road from the rear parking lot entrance at 2281 Ocean Boulevard to east of Bernard Drive), have presented observable safety concerns by the residents of the community.

The safety concerns include:

- Erratic speeding and distracted drivers traveling on Perkins Road in search of parking,
- Illegally parked cars (parking in "No Parking" areas, parking on pavement where prohibited, parking too close to fire hydrants and parking too close to private driveways),
- Vehicles hastily turning around in private driveways in order to change direction and/or find an off-pavement parking spot on Perkins Road – safety concerns arise when this activity (erratic entrance/backing out of driveways) occurs without proper precautions for pedestrians and other vehicles in the immediate area,
- U-turns rapidly executed to change direction and/or find an off-pavement parking spot on Perkins Road - safety concerns arise when this activity (erratic turnaround) occurs without proper precautions for pedestrians and other vehicles in the immediate area,
- Vehicles backing up on Perkins Road at a dangerous speed in order to find a parking spot on the street - safety concerns arise when this activity (dangerous speed in reverse) occurs without proper precautions for pedestrians and other vehicles in the immediate area,
- Stacking of cars waiting to park in the private parking lot at the rear of the 2281 Ocean Boulevard property,
- Cars stopping and unloading on both sides of Perkins Road, obstructing traffic flow and sight lines for vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Perkins Road,
- The urgent need for support from the State of New Hampshire Parks system in managing the Jenness Beach State Park parking Lot and directing cars to other available beach areas, including Wallis Sands State Park and Odiorne State Park, when the Jenness Beach State Park parking lot is full.

The Committee discussed the unique situation on Perkins Road, including the following existing conditions:

- The attraction of the Jenness Beach State Park, with lack of adequate parking to accommodate the increased level of visitors to the area;
- The popularity of the businesses at 2281 Ocean Boulevard;
- A private 150 car parking lot located at the rear of the 2281 Ocean Boulevard property, with the only entrance to the parking lot located on Perkins Road;
- Perkins Road provides key access to vehicles to and from the beach area for vehicles approaching the area from points west and from the Town of Rye;
- Parking allowed on the south side of Perkins Road signed “No Parking on Pavement” (located on the east adjacent to the property at 2281 Ocean Boulevard to the “No Parking” sign east of Bernard Road) is inviting to visitors searching for parking opportunities due to its proximity to all of the above and the knowledge that the parking allowed on Perkins Road is free to the public.

Period of Impact

The Committee discussed the period of time Perkins Road experiences the impact resulting in safety concerns. The consensus of the Committee is the period related to safety concerns spans from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, with July and August weekends often generating a significant volume of traffic. It was agreed weather is a contributing factor to visitor and vehicular traffic experienced on Perkins Road. Good beach days generate high levels of traffic and activity. The Committee also agreed that the summer traffic and parking situation has been worsening progressively on the Rye seacoast and on Perkins Road, in particular. Some Committee participants offered the opinion that Rye beaches are now the only area offering free parking on the New Hampshire seacoast.

The Committee also discussed observations regarding the time of day and days of the week that the traffic situation is the worst in the Perkins Road area. It was the consensus of the Committee and attendees that the traffic situation on Perkins Road peaks on summer weekends during the time period from 7 am to as late as 8 pm.

Potential Solutions

Focused on developing solutions to mitigate the safety concerns related to the increase in summer traffic, the Committee discussed temporary seasonal, and potentially permanent, changes to the Perkins Road traffic flow.

Committee discussion included corrective measures such as blocking access to Perkins Road on weekends or adjusting traffic flow to a one-way east-bound traffic pattern during the summer. The Committee, along with input from Police Chief Kevin Walsh, concluded it would be difficult to temporarily modify traffic flow and behavior over a 3-month period, and specifically on weekends. The consensus was that it would be difficult to communicate and enforce changes to the traffic flow since the majority of the people during this time period are not locals.

Additional discussion included the following:

1. The elimination of “No Parking on Pavement” parking on the south side of Perkins Road,
2. The creation of a safe passageway for pedestrians traveling east and west on Perkins Road,
3. The addition of sidewalks,
4. The installation of temporary speed bumps along Perkins Road,
5. The width of Perkins Road,
6. Additional signage and roadway markings on Perkins Road,
7. The need for police or “civilian traffic officer” at the intersection of Perkins Road and Route 1A to facilitate efficient flow of traffic and deter excessive traffic from entering Perkins Road,
8. The need for increased police presence on weekends to direct traffic,

9. Proactive enforcement of the town parking ordinance, rather than reacting to parking violations via parking tickets

Addressing the personnel suggestions above, Chief Walsh mentioned there is a shortage of qualified part time seasonal police candidates, and he noted Hampton is having difficulty filling their open positions.

CONCLUSION

The Committee respectfully requests the Selectmen consideration of the following short-term and long-term recommendations for implementation to address safety concerns on Perkins Road.

Short Term Recommendations that can be made prior to Memorial Day 2019

1. Stripe the fog lines at the Perkins Road/Ocean Boulevard intersection so that the fog lines are 24 feet apart. Currently the intersection is measured to be over 30 feet wide. By striping narrower travel lanes, the intent is to influence a slower speed for vehicles entering and exiting Perkins Road. In addition, the smaller throat width at the intersection may discourage vehicles from entering onto Perkins Road which contribute to congestion and safety concerns.
2. Install “No Parking-No Stopping” signs on the north side of Perkins Road, along the 2271 Ocean Boulevard condominium property boundary on the north side of Perkins Road at the Ocean Boulevard intersection.
3. Install temporary bollards along the 2281 Ocean Boulevard parking lot bordering Perkins Road to better define entrance and exit to the property and discourage vehicles from backing into Perkins Road.
(ATTACHMENT C)
4. Engage in conversation with the owners/operators of the 150-car parking lot at the rear of 2281 Ocean Boulevard about not allowing cars to stack on Perkins Road, waiting to enter the parking lot, and posting a “Lot Full” sign at both the north and south approaches to Perkins Road at the Ocean Boulevard intersection when the parking lot is full.
5. Police Department to install the digital message board in front of the Dunes Motel at 2281 Ocean Boulevard with messages alerting visitors when lots are full and directing traffic to alternative seacoast sites.
6. Box out driveways on the south side of Perkins to provide residents with appropriate sight lines to exit and enter their property driveways safely.
7. Install striping and pavement markings (No Parking, No Parking on Pavement) on Perkins Road as soon as possible, as weather permits.

Long Term Recommendations

1. Hire a traffic engineering firm as soon as possible to analyze, at a minimum, the following over the course of a summer and provide recommendations for traffic and safety improvements to Perkins Road and the Ocean Boulevard intersection:
 - a. traffic patterns
 - b. speed
 - c. signage
 - d. crosswalks on Ocean Boulevard
 - e. safe passageway for pedestrians traveling east and west on Perkins Road

- f. pedestrian movement, including consideration of side walk installation
- g. bicycle traffic
- h. loading and unloading of vehicles on Ocean Boulevard and Perkins Road
- i. observe traffic patterns entering and exiting the 2281 Ocean Boulevard property (front and rear parking lots)
- j. identify required adjustments, if any, to the Town of Rye Parking Ordinance.

Traffic Engineering firm should hold appropriate public hearings with Perkins Road residents, business owners, Beach Committee and other interested stakeholders.

2. Prior to hiring a traffic engineering firm and completing any permanent improvements recommended in this report, hire a survey firm to complete a partial property survey of the 2271 and 2281 Ocean Boulevard properties and their frontage on Perkins Road and Ocean Boulevard. The property survey should also include research on the width and location of the state Right of Way along Ocean Boulevard and the width and location of the town Right of Way on Perkins Road and where the current roadway pavement is located relative to the right of way.
3. Coordinate with the State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and the 2271 Ocean Boulevard condominium association for the removal of pavement on the north side of the Perkins Road/Ocean Boulevard intersection to provide a 24 ft wide roadway. Plant low growth shrubs in the area of the pavement removal such that it will discourage people from walking on the north side of Perkins Road, and discourage cars from loading and unloading in this area.
4. Enter into an agreement with the State of New Hampshire whereby the state will assist with traffic control and enforcement of vehicles illegally parking, including vehicles over 20 ft in length, and stopping along Ocean Boulevard. Traffic control can include, but not be limited to, gating off the entrance to the Jenness Beach Park parking lot when full and providing guidance (i.e. via additional personnel and/or installation of a message board) directing visitors to other seacoast sites with appropriate accommodations for visitors, such as Rye Harbor State Park, Wallis Sands State Park or Odiorne State Park.
5. It is our understanding funding is not available to engage a traffic engineering firm prior to the 2019 Memorial Day weekend. Committee members have agreed to observe the vehicular and pedestrian activity over the summer of 2019 as a result of the short term recommendations suggested above and provide further observations and recommendations to the Board of Selectmen in September 2019 for discussions with a traffic engineering firm.

We appreciate the Board of Selectmen's attention to the above matters.

Very Truly Yours,

Perkins Road Safety Committee

Enclosures

Attachment A: Board of Selectmen Charge to the Committee

Attachment B: Committee Meeting Minutes

Attachment C: Temporary modifications to Perkins Road/Ocean Boulevard intersection.

Attachment A

Board of Selectmen Charge to the Committee

Attachment B

Committee Meeting Minutes

Attachment C

Temporary modifications to Perkins Road/Ocean
Boulevard intersection.