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MAYOR

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Dear Resident,

Below is a summary of the publicly advertised meeting of Monday June 25 regarding the proposed roundabout at the intersection of North Haledon Avenue and Manchester Avenue.

Chuck Silverstein, the Passaic County Traffic Engineer, had emailed me a few months ago asking for a meeting with him to discuss the design of the proposed roundabout. I made it very clear to him that any meeting regarding the proposed roundabout would be open to all the members of the public, and for that reason I scheduled a special meeting on Monday, June 25, at High Mountain School at 7:00 p.m. to make it possible for as many residents as possible to attend. In attendance at the June 25 meeting were Council Members, Chuck Silverstein, as well as representatives of the NJTPA (North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority) and consultants, hired by Passaic County, who designed the proposed roundabout. Also present at the meeting was Passaic County Freeholder John Bartlett, a member of the NJPTA.

I opened the meeting by citing the statistics of the numerous right-angle collisions that had occurred at that intersection and that I had approached the County in 2016 asking if they had any idea how to make this intersection safer since it involved a County Road. I also mentioned that the Borough is about to accept the study of our Borough Engineer, who suggests lowering the speed on all roads in the Borough to 25 mph, and that I hope that the County will concur with the Borough Engineer's recommendation and also lower the speed on County roads to 25 mph.

Freeholder Bartlett stated that he was happy to see so many members of the public at this meeting. He stated that this proposed roundabout would not cost North Haledon tax payers any money. He further stated that the Complete Streets Committee he sits on wants safe streets for everyone, and the proposed roundabout will result in not only less accidents, but also less severe accidents.

Chuck Silverstein advised that after I had approached him regarding this dangerous intersection, he contacted the NJPTA regarding this intersection in 2016, and after some research of their own, they pointed out to him that 85% of the crashes in the last five years at that intersection had been right angle collisions, which are the most dangerous type of crashes.

Some questions were asked regarding bicycle, school bus, and truck traffic; these will be taken into consideration as the designing of the roundabout progresses.

A representative of the NJPTA stated that federal funding will only pay for a roundabout. A four-way stop cannot be considered because there is too much of a discrepancy between the volume of traffic on both roads (the volume of traffic should be equal on both streets) and speed bumps on North Haledon Avenue are prohibited by State statute because the traffic volume is too high according to Mr. Silverstein.

An allegation was made that the round-about would negatively impact Woodsie's. I advised that I had already spoken with Shotmeyer, the property owner, and that he had no objection to a round-about, and that no one wanted to hurt Ray's business. A question was raised regarding the possibility of the County invoking eminent-domain to secure property to build the roundabout. I made it very clear that I would not allow anyone's property to be seized beyond the ten foot right-of-way. I stated that if the County approached property owners, and they were willing to sell some of their property to the County that would be acceptable.

A resident asked if lowering the speed on both roads to 25 mph, placing speed humps on Manchester Avenue, or installing flashing lights would help alleviate the situation. A representative from the NJPTA stated that drivers travel at a speed that they are comfortable at, and that signs do not reduce speed; he also stated that one of the major problems is that it is a skewed intersection, which is why flashing lights would not improve the situation, and that speed humps would not affect the sight distance. He once again reiterated that a roundabout would geometrically reduce the speed to 20 mph in the roundabout, increasing safety and improving visibility; that federal funding would only be available for a roundabout, and that if the roundabout was not built in the Borough of North Haledon, the grant would be spent elsewhere in Passaic County.

When asked how the traffic data was collected, the NJPTA representative stated that a camera had been placed at that location during several week days.

Two residents stated that the visibility at the intersection was blocked by overgrown brush. I advised that I would have the DPW tend to that complaint the next day.

A statement was made that the round-about could reduce property values. The NJPTA resident stated that buyers, when shopping for a home, would prefer to purchase a home near a safe intersection. I further stated that I did not believe that a roundabout would negatively impact the quality of life of the home-owners near the round-about.

Councilmember Donna Puglisi stated that the Borough could look at other options than the roundabout, which would be paid for by the Borough. Freeholder Bartlett stated that a roundabout is what would work best at that location, but that the Board of Chosen Freeholders will reallocate the funds if the Borough does not want them.

I stated that I felt like we are being backed into a corner, even if the County does not intend do to so; it is clear that a roundabout is the safest solution, and that if we turn down the free roundabout, we would not be doing our job. The Borough is not against the idea of spending money, since we will be replacing the two traffic lights on Overlook Avenue.

A representative from the NJPTA stated that they are willing to tweak the design of the roundabout, and they will reach out to property owners regarding possible purchasing of some property.

I stated that property owners within the 200 foot list will be noticed again once a new meeting has been set up.

A resident indicated that after the roundabout in Franklin Lakes was installed, it was realized that there was still a need for additional signage, which was subsequently installed. He asked if there was a minimum volume of traffic for a roundabout to be considered, to which a representative of the NJPTA responded in the negative. A discussion ensued regarding the rumble strips installed by the County, and many residents voiced their opposition to having the rumble strips reinstalled. I advised that I had only received one email against the rumble strips, and encouraged the members of the public to communicate their opposition of the rumble strips to me in writing and to Passaic County.

A resident asked whether the County would allow the Borough to install a blinking light. Mr. Silverstein advised that the County may consider granting permission, but that a blinking light would not slow drivers down the way a roundabout would. This same resident asked why a traffic light could not be installed. Mr. Silverstein responded that the volume of traffic did not warrant a traffic light. When this same resident stated that he believed that a roundabout was over-kill, Captain Darby stated that all the accidents at that intersection were bad accidents, and that although Franklin Lakes has approximately ten times the volume of traffic that the Borough has at this intersection, there were less traffic accidents at the Franklin Lakes roundabout, since it was re-designed three years ago.

A concern was voiced regarding the locations of the pedestrian crossings by the roundabout, namely that drivers would be so focused on looking to their left as they yielded to the traffic in the roundabout, that they would not look to the right to notice pedestrians crossing the street in the pedestrian crossing. The County advised that they would take that concern into consideration when tweaking their new design.

Another question was raised regarding the need for a sidewalk as well as ADA ramps. A representative of the NJPTA advised that the sidewalks were there not only for pedestrians, but also to allow bicyclists to push their bicycles if they did not want ride them through the roundabout and that all projects that receive federal funding (which this grant is) mandate ADA ramps.

I mentioned that perhaps tractor trailers could be banned except for local deliveries on North Haledon, and Mr. Silverstein stated that there would be a good chance that the County would give it favorable consideration.

In closing I reminded the members of the public that this meeting had been taped, and that if they wanted a copy of the tape, they should let me know.

If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

Borough of North Haledon

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Randy George".

Randy George, Mayor