

Public Hearing Minutes
October 23, 2013 Joint Public Hearing for the Towns of Kingston and Newton
Kingston Town Hall, 163 Main Street, Kingston, NH

A Public Hearing hosted by the Boards of Selectmen for the towns of Kingston and Newton was called to order at the Kingston Town Hall at 7:00 pm on October 23rd, 2013.

Kingston Chairman Mark Heitz led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then noted that the Hearing would be televised on Public Access Channel 21. He introduced his fellow Kingston Board of Selectmen members - Peter Broderick and George Korn - and Raymond Thayer and Robert Donovan of the Newton Board of Selectmen. Other town officials introduced themselves, as follows: Kingston Road Agent Richard St. Hilaire; Kingston Fire Chief Bill Seaman; Kingston Police Chief Don Briggs; Newton Emergency Management Director Larry Foote; Newton Road Agent Mike Pivero; and Newton Town Administrator Nancy Wrigley. Chairman Heitz then introduced Timothy Scott, Data Manager from NH Emergency Communications, and Kenny-Lynn Dempsey, Field Manager from NH Emergency Communications.

Chairman Heitz stated that the purpose of the hearing was to discuss the addressing along the roadway heading from the intersection of Newton Junction Road and Wilders Grove Road in Kingston. The roadway extends into Newton, where it changes to Country Pond Road, and changes back to Wilders Grove when it reaches the bridge. It then winds back into Kingston and becomes Concannon Road. Emergency Services personnel of both towns, as well as the Emergency Communications office in Concord, have identified the area as confusing and potentially creating problems in emergency response, particularly for emergency personnel unfamiliar with the area (such as mutual aid response teams or ALS teams).

He noted that the hearing had been publicly posted in both towns, had been advertised on the public access channel available in both towns, had been posted on both towns' websites, and had been advertised in local newspapers. Property owners in the area had received individual notice via first class mail.

Chairman Heitz then advised that Mr. Scott would give a presentation of the issue and of his office's recommended solutions.

Mr. Scott reiterated the issues with the roadway and presented the two recommendations for action that the 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Office will support. Those are:

1. Rename the entire road length Wilders Grove Road, with consecutive numbering from beginning to end as it passes into Newton and back out into Kingston.

2. Rename Wilders Grove Road in Kingston to Country Pond Road, which would join the existing Country Pond Road in Newton and extend up to the bridge, where it would become Wilders Grove and remain Wilders Grove for the remainder of the roadway, including along what now is known as Concannon Road.

Mr. Scott noted that Option 1 is preferable since it allows for consecutive numbering that will remove all confusion, however it means changes for 81 homes. Option 2 also is acceptable as long as the road name change is clearly identified at the bridge and houses along both the Country Pond and Wilders Grove sections are clearly numbered. The only issue with option 2 is that it will require renaming of the existing Country Pond Road in Kingston and will entail changes to 39 residential addresses - either road name and number or just number.

Mr. Scott explained that it's up to towns to take action as they see fit, however, his office will assist with the process only if one of their recommended solutions is accepted.

Chairman Heitz asked if the state views the roadway as a single road even though it travels through two towns. Mr. Scott advised that it is a single roadway and that changing the name at the bridge, as called for in plan 2, will continue to create a level of confusion, however it's felt that the confusion can be handled with signage and clear numbering of the houses.

Kingston Road Agent Richard St. Hilaire expressed the opinion that plan 1 as presented is the only way to permanently and totally address the problem. Kingston Fire Chief Seaman agreed, noting that the multiple road name changes and duplicate numbers has presented problems for his staff and he would like to see a permanent solution. Kingston Police Chief Briggs also agreed. Newton Emergency Management Director Larry Foote expressed the opinion that Plan 2 is preferable because it affects fewer people. Newton Road Agent Mike Pivero advised that the issues involved can't be addressed by signage alone and noted that while plan 1 more completely solves the problems, plan 2 does affect far fewer people.

Kingston Selectman Broderick voiced his support for Plan 1, discussing the importance of rapid response in emergencies. Mr. Scott repeated that the towns will need to agree on which plan will be accepted in order for the change to be made. Chairman Heitz expressed support for plan 1, advising that it will erase all confusion in the area once and for all.

Chairman Heitz, noting that no other officials had comments, opened the floor to the public, requesting that each speaker approach the microphone and identify themselves prior to making their remarks.

Mike Fortin of Newton advised that he commends Chief Briggs for trying to find a permanent solution to the confusion in the area, but suggested that proper signs and identification of the town lines will be sufficient to address the problems.

Joanne Thomason Mastry, a Newton summer resident, advised that she believes Newton has addressed the issue with proper signage and that Kingston could do the same and eliminate confusion. Both Mr. Scott and Mr. Foote disputed that, noting that signage alone will not solve the problems.

Tony Zipkin of 58 Wilders Grove agreed that Newton has addressed the problem within its town lines and suggested that Kingston make whatever changes are necessary to solve its own problems. He also advised that, if changes are to be made, he'd like to see some actual data about emergency response problems.

Nancy Johnson, who owns 20 Concannon Road, advised that she's never heard of a problem with the addressing, and suggested that signs indicating where the town lines are would solve whatever problems arise. She also presented a petition of Kingston residents in the area requesting that no change be made to the Concannon Road name or numbering.

Sandra Maida of 10 Concannon Road advised that any problems residents have had with deliveries or service calls can be addressed with proper signage. She also expressed concern that changes in the area will lead to more confusion if mapping and GPS locating services aren't properly notified. Mr. Scott advised that his office takes care of notifying those companies and of updating GPS locator companies. Mrs. Maida suggested that a lot of concern can be alleviated by just properly numbering the houses with easily readable, reflective numbers.

Cynthia Wilson of 42 Wilders Grove in Newton advised that she would prefer plan 2 if either is to be undertaken, because it preserves the name Wilders Grove, which has historical significance in the area. She also expressed concern that, because she gained title to her property through probate and because the property was identified by street address, any change will affect her title. Newton Town Administrator Nancy Wrigley advised that no action will need to be taken until subsequent transfer or inheritance, when the property can be identified with the former address and whatever new address or map and lot designation is most descriptive. Kingston Selectman Broderick advised that her probate records most likely reference a book and page deed reference as well as the street address.

Ken Thompson of Newton stated that he sees no issue and wants no change. He presented a petition of Wilders Grove residents requesting that the Wilders Grove area remain unchanged.

Christopher Cattin of 56 Wilders Grove in Newton advised that proper signage is the solution and suggested that it's up to first responders to make sure of where they're going. He wants no change to the road names or numbers.

Newton Selectman Robert Donovan addressed a question to Mike Fortin, resident of Wilders Grove and former member of the Newton Board of Selectmen, asking what Mr. Fortin's thoughts had been when in 1999 he approved renaming of six Newton roadways. Mr. Fortin explained that those changes had been necessary because of similarity of names. Mr. Scott of the State Emergency Communications Office affirmed that during that time period, confusion of similar names was the main issue being addressed. Now - 15 years later - the state is identifying areas of confusion such as found in the Country Pond / Wilders Grove / Concannon Road area and working to address those.

Mary Donahue of 48 Wilders Grove advised that she's building a new home and has had no issue with finding the address using her GPS locator. She recognizes that there's a problem with Kingston's addressing, but sees no issue in Newton.

Barbara Card of 1 Wilders Gove in Newton advised that she has distributed flyers to make residents aware of the necessity for clearly numbering their homes. She stated that she believes that will solve the issue.

Ray Donald of 6 Concannon Road in Kingston stated that he wants no changes other than better signs and more prominent house numbers.

Ken Thompson of Newton asked what the next step will be and how residents will be notified of any decision. Chairman Heitz advised that the two Boards of Selectmen will need to determine how they will proceed and, once a decision is made, residents likely will be notified of any changes that affect them and should be able to find the information of the towns' websites.

Chairman Heitz cut off public commentary at 9:03 pm.

It was agreed among the two Boards and the emergency response personnel present that a site walk of the area will be held on October 26th, beginning at 10:00 am, and that plans for additional action can be formulated then.

There being no further business, the hearing was adjourned at 9:16 pm. Chairman Heitz thanked all present for their attendance and input.

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Grant, Administrative Assistant
Kingston, N. H.