

June 14, 2022

Dear Ms. Cook and members of the Select Board:

Over the last several years—with an especially dramatic increase this year, the taxpayers of Southborough have expressed numerous concerns regarding DPW management, town employee Karen Galligan, the DPW's use of funds, and allocation/priority of projects.

All have received no response and policy remains exactly the same.

The Superintendent's employment contract is up for a renewal at the end of this month and our understanding is that all negotiation on this contract has occurred in Executive Session.

Thus, the true employers of Ms. Galligan (we the taxpayers in Southborough) will not know details of the contract until it is signed and in effect after 6/30/22.

Therefore, we feel it is important to let the Select Board know our thoughts now on the operation of the DPW and what we see as the errors and egregious behavior that have taken place without repercussions.

Further, we wish to have input on how projects are prioritized.

Please understand, this letter is not just from me: the following list of issues, concerns and projects is sent to you on behalf of dozens of concerned taxpayers, with names removed so they might remain anonymous. Although the comments I received may only represent a small minority of this town, NOT ONE was positive regarding the way the DPW is run, how it spends our money, the way it is overseen, or the actions and decisions of the Superintendent.

I URGE you to take these thoughts of Southborough taxpayers—the people who elected you to represent them—into consideration when you place your vote on continuing the employment and contract of our current DPW Superintendent.

Southborough can do better. And we should.



Patricia Burns Fiore  
10 Winter Street

## A SELECTION OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

### DPW Superintendent

- Why does the DPW Superintendent's immediate supervisor not do written performance reviews (that residents would have access to)? That needs to change. Without proper written performance reviews, it's impossible to exit employees.
- I believe lack of supervision and input of the DPW director has allowed her to proceed with projects without approval of boards and processes. She does not demonstrate competency in her position. A partial list of areas for concern follows: transfer station/ swap shop debacle, the number of poor roads, lack of plans for sidewalks, St. Mark's pocket park, tree debacle
- I recently saw a video on the Southborough FB page with Karen and Marty Healy, etc. which was so horrifying it should be plenty of ammunition to let her go. Karen has been incompetent, and over her head, since she was promoted many years ago. I find it unacceptable that Mark Purple does not do any employee reviews. I am VERY concerned with her contract being renewed.

### DPW Procedures

- Why does DPW want to find ways around meeting with the Planning Board and properly presenting projects versus looking for loopholes that allow it to not have to present and get approval for projects? How do we close that loophole so things like the Deerfoot project and indiscriminate tree removal stop?
- When the bylaws in our town are not followed by the employees of the town, why are there zero consequences? The residents have to pay consequences when they break the rules; why are the employees of our town exempt from fines and repercussions that residents face.
- When I see so many people asking "anyone know if there's a plan to ..." This points to a general lack of communication and transparency. This is what I would tackle first. Can we establish a forum or website where residents can publicly suggest areas of need, and where the town can post projects that have been received, when they've been considered and by whom, and what the plans are? If this already exists, seems like it could be more accessible.
- Karen Galligan seems to have concentrated a lot of power and authority into her position over the years by not replacing higher up positions (town engineer, arborist, etc) and using contractors or lower level people who all report to her to make the decisions – with no oversight. The fact that there is a committee specifically in place to provide oversight of the DPW (Public Works Planning Board) and on it are a number of ex DPW-related people and in the midst of a DPW crisis of confidence, refuses to even meet. Obviously, this board is not providing much oversight. For some reason, her poor actions and decisions never seem to have any consequences. I fail to understand why.
- I am concerned about Karen Galligan saying moving pavement means she doesn't have to go to Planning Board; she used that excuse when asked about the Deerfoot intersection. It's on the video... Mark Purple said she could move pavement without board approvals!! What?
- In 2011, the three member Select Board (Boland, Kolenda and Rooney) voted to eliminate the Town Engineer position based on a request from Karen Galligan for an estimated cost savings of \$20K/yr. It is worth noting that, similar to the Tree Warden position, Southborough eliminated a position without the proper expertise to perform the work. We therefore use outside consultants that cost the Town much more than if we had a permanent part-time or full-time position.

- Southborough's DPW had not been in compliance with the State's Pesticide Control Act, and in fact, Ms. Galligan received a Warning Letter from the Department of Agricultural Resources (MA DAR) in October 2017. The letter ordered our Tree Warden and Grounds Supervisor to Cease and Desist, as he was found spraying herbicide without the proper commercial license or certification. As noted in the letter the Applicator was also found to be spraying an illegal (banned) herbicide that is not on the State's approved list for Right of Way and sensitive areas. Finally, our DPW and it's employee were cited for keeping records of the applications so careless they were considered "not true and accurate." The Town was also found to be in violation of having no approved 5-year VMP or yearly operating plan (YOP), and in fact, for not having any plan. The State mandated DPW to be completely in compliance with MGL c 132B, 333 CMR 11.00 and other regulations "or further legal action would be taken." Currently, there is no plan for this year despite notifying the Board of Health they would start spraying in a few weeks.

#### Roads, Paving and Safety

- I have contacted (the DPW) multiple times about Lovers Lane being repaved. For years I have been promised it is on the list and recently (within the past year) was told Lovers and Pine Hill were at the top of the list but now I am told there was a change and it is going to another committee. We have lived here for 16 years and it has never been repaved. The potholes this last winter were particularly terrible. Very sick of getting the run around.
- Speed and safety concerns on Oak Hill Rd. The SB and DPW have been receptive to hearing about concerns and possible solutions, but nothing has changed in the five years we've lived here.
- So many horrible roads in our small town for years now – main roads, Rte. 85 – since doing the repairs why did they not complete the paving in a decent manner? What happened to those funds?
- There is no visibility at the Ledge Hill/Sears Road intersection. Every ten years or so, someone from the neighborhood tries to get attention for this but nothing ever happens. Both my kids were hit there when they began driving — the police officer who arrived at the scene said it's a known problem and was shocked my son walked away unscathed (the car was totaled.). My husband tried to address this and was told by DPW Director that nothing can be done without a study because Sears Road is a "throughway," but it's never put in the budget. He did the calculations — it is literally impossible to stop at the stop sign and pull out to turn left safely even if the car on Sears is going the speed limit (and we know they aren't!)

#### St. Mark's Park (Debacle)

- Complete disregard for the Native burial ground/removal of old growth trees on behalf of a private entity and with monies used in an inappropriate manner.
- How was she allowed to get grant money from the state for a History Walk and spend it to move an intersection? Isn't that an outright misuse of funds?
- it is an absolute eyesore. How was this allowed to proceed right under our eyes? Outrageous to apply for a grant and not adhere to the terms. Outrageous to desecrate a native burial ground. Who planned and executed this project?
- This is a totally mismanaged and bungled project! All because Karen Galligan wanted to move an intersection? Grant money that was not used according to the grant. License agreements with St. Mark's (written by Karen Galligan?) instead of proper procedure of a land swap or

easements approved, as required by law, at Town Meeting. Disregard for concerns from the Southborough Historic Commission and the Massachusetts Historic Commission. Spending taxpayer money on private property owned by St. Mark's. Not one cent of taxpayer money (state grant, ch 90 funds, DPW budget from property taxes, etc) should be spent to build a park, sidewalks or parking lot on private property that the taxpayers will then pay to maintain in perpetuity.

#### Flagg Road/ Deerfoot Road Intersection

- One prime example of prioritizing would be...Why would we tear up the intersection on Deerfoot which is perfectly paved and in excellent condition when Parkville, the right hand turn from Rt 9, has been broken down to gravel after we let the gas company come in and dig up the entire road and not repave it properly?? Why should the town now have to repave a road that was torn up for another company to improve its infrastructure?? Why were they not held accountable to repave the road into proper condition?
- Park Central is not moving forward with no plan for appeal. The reason for the change to the intersection of Flagg and Deerfoot was to increase traffic flow/safety for the expected onslaught of added vehicles. Healthy trees would need to be cut down to change the intersection. There is now no need for the intersection change and residents do not want it (that is clear). Karen Galligan wants the change to the intersection. Residents do not want the trees cut down. Karen Galligan wants the trees cut down. Town-elected Planning Board said the trees should not be cut down. Karen Galligan wants to appeal the decision and proceed with cutting down the trees and changing the intersection. Hmm... wonder what will happen.
- Is the DPW moving ahead with altering the intersection at Flagg/Deerfoot Roads despite the fact it is no longer necessary due to the court decision on Park Central.
- Continued attempts to remove healthy trees while dead ones stick around (see Flagg Road).

#### Parkerville Road

- Parkerville north side is horrible. I wonder if anyone in DPW actually drives these roads and experiences how horrible they are
- Parkville, the right hand turn from Rt 9, has been broken down to gravel after we let the gas company come in and dig up the entire road and not repave it properly?? Why should the town now have to repave a road that was torn up for another company to improve its infrastructure?? Why were they not held accountable to repave the road into proper condition?
- This was discussed once again at a BOS meeting months ago where our BOS promised to look into the contract with the gas company and find out why Parkerville Road was not repaired to its previous condition. Why did the DPW not follow through on this? Why should residents pay to repave the road that was only ruined because of the gas company work?
- Why would we tear up the intersection on Deerfoot which is perfectly paved and in excellent condition when Parkville, the right hand turn from Rt 9, has been broken down to gravel after we let the gas company come in and dig up the entire road and not repave it properly? Why should the town now have to repave a road that was torn up for another company to improve its infrastructure?? Why were they not held accountable to repave the road into proper condition?
- I'm just surprised what a mess it is since it is a main thoroughfare of the town with Rte. 9 right there and two major schools, plus it leads to Main St.

- That road is outrageously horrible and I can't believe it's even tolerated by the residents that live on that road and have to drive that every day.
- I don't live on Parkerville. But we use this road twice a day during the school year. There is lot of traffic on this road for nearby schools, including St Marks, Fay, Neary and Trottier. I agree that this road needs more attention than any other road.
- Does anyone know if there are plans to repave Parkerville on the Neary side of Rt. 9?
- I'm glad I don't have to drive it daily – was just there recently and could not believe how bad it is

#### Northborough Road culvert

- Is the intention for Northborough Rd. to be closed permanently near Chestnut Hill Farm because of that bridge? Have we even tried to ask for state funds to repair it?
- Why should Old Northborough Rd. be closed down for two+ years to fix the culvert that was washed away? Why does it take so long to repair an unusable road?

#### No to Hopkinton?

- The proposed sewerage hookup to Hopkinton, as negotiated by Purple and Galligan, greatly overstates the benefits to Southborough and vastly understates the risks and costs. This should be subject to extensive review by an outside consultant, who should also detail the concomitant costs not listed here, such as road tear-up and repair, police details, utility rerouting and the inconvenience of residents in the affected areas, none of which are outlined in the proposal.

#### Sidewalks

- The few current sidewalks we do have need to be maintained. The sidewalk on Bridge St. is crumbling and in danger of collapsing at the bridge.
- According to mysouthborough.com. when allocating ARPA funds, "DPW Superintendent Karen Galligan told the committee that there were \$1.2M in sidewalk projects that she believed could be completed within the fiscal timeframe. The committee shrunk that to a list they felt was more achievable. The sidewalks were described as on the following roads: Cordaville, Richards, Woodland, and 'St. Mark's North'." What exactly is St. Mark's North and why should we spend our miniscule sidewalk budget on anything other than sidewalks that will be most used by taxpayers? I certainly hope this is not another attempt to fund the completion of the St. Mark's intersection fiasco by Ms. Galligan's expertise in moving around money to spend on other projects.

#### Transfer Station

- How was it that our recycling was all land-filled for almost a decade because Ms. Galligan was unaware that if you put your recycling in black plastic, it clogs the sorting machines, so they automatically landfill anything like that. I was the one who told Karen about this several years ago and the signs there now are because I pestered her about this. How much of our recycling is actually recycled? What can we do better? What isn't working? Single stream is a myth.
- I volunteered at the Swap Shop last summer because I believed in the mission. What I found was a lack of supervision and leadership.

- There were no rules or guidelines or accountability. When the swap shop was closed down, I was told Karen did not know there were volunteers there, despite the fact that volunteers had been there all summer. Lisa Braccio, on behalf of the Select Board, said it was a personnel matter and she needed time to work it out. I was also told Mark Purple had told Karen she could do what she wanted about the Swap Shop. In my experience this lack of supervision would result in discipline for those involved.
- There are towns that run successful swap shops. And successful recycling programs. There are people that wanted to help, but apparently, DPW does not want it to work.
- I would sum it up by saying that Karen demonstrated lack of knowledge about what was going on in her department, lack of leadership and lack of supervision of her staff.
- One or more times per week the swap shop is emptied by backhoe and everything is thrown in the hopper. So, the efforts of people to recycle and re-use is just thrown in the garbage?
- Not once during the time the volunteers spent organizing and maintaining the sheds and area, did anyone see Karen or Mark Purple visit the swap shop. We never got to hear what the issues were so we could address them and were just flat out “fired”. There was a lot more support for our efforts than those that were upset. The volunteers deserved much better treatment. Karen works for us – though it is clear she doesn’t think so.

#### Trees

- Why does it often seem like healthy trees are prioritized to cut down over dead trees? Is it just in relationship to the projects prioritized by the DPW? And, dead, potentially dangerous trees wait years for attention?
- How exactly is tree removal prioritized by the DPW? Healthy, endangered trees are to be cut down and dead trees have been on a list for years for removal
- Why are we wasting time and money to remove healthy trees when there are numerous dead trees that are a liability to the town? Why are we not removing dead trees on the tree reports where an arborist (consultant) has previously reported them as dead. Some of these trees have been dead since 2017.

#### The appearance of Southborough

- The disgraceful state of the Cordaville triangle. It's so disgusting. I walked through with a friend the other day, and shrubs are dying (no sun, no water), overgrown dandelions are sprawled out all over the place, the trees are crammed together with no room at all to spread out, and the sitting area which would be nice with a bit of shade is completely exposed, with weeds everywhere. It's so embarrassing, especially considering the history associated with the area. Why did the town even bother? Just so sad
- The 84 Main Street project is coming to a wonderful conclusion, far better than we had ever hoped. However, the piece along Parkerville Road, which the town received and easement for to drain the Main Street Project, was supposed to be cleaned of invasives and planted with monumental street trees. 3 years has passed, and the invasives are taking over again. When is this going to be done? The town is contractually obligated.

#### Improper behavior swept under the rug – no consequences

- Video catches Southborough DPW covering state truck in snow, WCVB, 2/27/2014. Multiple sources have confirmed to the MetroWest Daily News that DPW Director Karen Galligan drove one of the trucks involved in the incident. The town, citing personnel privacy laws, has declined

to identify the DPW employees.

- 2010 internal investigation launched by Southborough selectmen against a collection of town employees. The investigation stems from a gathering of town employees at Pizzeria Uno in Westborough after the special town meeting last September. Reportedly Town Administrator Jean Kitchen, Assistant Town Administrator Vanessa Hale, Public Works Superintendent Karen Galligan, then-Town Planner Vera Koliass, Town Accountant Carla McAuliffe, Fire Chief John Mauro, Town Recreation Director Doreen Ferguson, Town Finance Director Brian Ballantine, and then-Assistant Town Clerk Dawn Michanowicz all were there.
- DPW Superintendent Karen Galligan (with approval of then-Selectman Marty Healy) applied for and received \$290,000 in state funding for a History Walk (“Southborough received \$290,000 to support the implementation of a new, “Southborough History Walk,” mass.com). According to mysouthborough.com (2/2/21) “Galligan clarified that the sidewalks, walkways, gathering areas in the draft plan were all included in the grant. Moving the intersection and drainage wasn’t. That would need to be funded through another source for road work (e.g., Chapter 90 or road maintenance under Town Meeting’s Capital Expense Article).” At a Select Board meeting earlier this spring, Ms. Galligan admitted the project was not done, and the grant money was all spent. In a cringe-worthy moment recorded on video, she said the money was gone, we should not get too involved in the details, gave a wink and two thumbs up.
- What other similar issues have not been made public?