

Dear Chapel Hill Town Council,

The purpose of this letter is to petition the council to update the existing method currently utilized to block Briarbridge Lane to thru traffic.

For nearly two decades, Briarbridge Lane has been designated a “No Thru Traffic” street. This decision was made many years ago and has proven to be a great solution for many years. I have personally spoken with all of the property owners on Briarbridge and we continue to support the council's decision to limit traffic on the street. The street, and bridge, is not wide enough to safely support a large volume of automobile traffic. Therefore the council wisely decided many years ago to block the road to thru traffic.

When this decision was made, the Chapel Hill Church of Christ owned the property at No. 2 Briarbridge. The church specifically requested that the method used to block the street be specially designed to allow their members to continue to use South Columbia to access the church. Therefore, a gate and concrete divider were designed and installed in an effort to block traffic on Briarbridge while still allowing members of the church at access the church property. A diagram of the current solution is included in the original resolution that I have attached.

Our family recently bought the home at No. 2 Briarbridge from the church. The gate is falling apart and is being held together by chains. If automobiles turn onto Briarbridge, as dozens do everyday, they have three options. 1) Break through the gate, 2) Use our driveway to go around the gate, or 3) Back their car onto South Columbia Street (there is no room to turn around). As you might imagine, backing onto South Columbia is extremely dangerous. We have learned, by watching cars drive around the existing gate (via our driveway), or by watching cars back onto South Columbia Street that the existing solution is not adequate.

Through site meetings with engineers from the Chapel Hill Public Works Department, the determination has been made that the best solution is to block the road in such a way that eliminates the problems outlined above, while still encouraging pedestrian and bicycle traffic on the road (the current gate makes it hard for both bikes and pedestrians to use the street). However, because the solution includes repositioning the roadblock, and the previous placement and method of blocking the road was specifically outlined in the resolution almost two decades ago, we decided that it was important to bring the matter before the council.

The solution that was recommended by Chapel Hill Public Works, and supported by the property owners on Briarbridge Lane, includes placing (removable) round concrete or steel poles across Briarbridge Lane closer to the intersection of Briarbridge and South Columbia. These poles would be similar to those used around campus to block automobile traffic, while still encouraging pedestrian and bike traffic. This would stop traffic before it can turn onto Briarbridge (eliminating the dangerous “backing up” onto South Columbia). They are removable, but 'permanently' locked in place so that they cannot be removed by pedestrians or automobile drivers. The only reason they would be removed would be if emergency vehicles needed to access the street, which, according to Chapel Hill Public Works, is unlikely because access is readily available via Ransom Street.

Through conversations with the Public Works engineers, this solution seems to be very inexpensive and cost effective.

Removal of the existing gate is also required. We currently are planning the removal of the existing commercial 'monolithic concrete divider' which is on our property in the middle of our driveway. While it was necessary for church traffic, it is not necessary, or functional, for a private residence. The original resolution includes a diagram of this divider. I mention this because this is another reason that the gate would not be functional in its current location.

Therefore, we would like to respectfully request that The Council to recommend that three traffic barrier poles be placed across Briarbridge at a point approximately 16-18 yards towards Columbia Street from the current gate location, and that the existing gate be removed.

If you have any questions at all, please contact us at your convenience.

Thank you,

Dan and Leigh Copeland  
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