

MEMORANDUM

PASSED

TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: David R. Taylor, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Closing Briarbridge Lane to Through Traffic
DATE: April 11, 1988

The attached resolution and ordinance would close Briarbridge Lane to through traffic by installing a physical barrier, a gate, on Briarbridge Lane near the intersection of Briarbridge Lane and Columbia Street.

Background

Briarbridge Lane is a narrow one-way residential street that varies in width from 14 feet to approximately 17 feet. We think the narrow width of the street, combined with a hill and sharp curve, make Briarbridge Lane unsuitable for use other than as a local residential street. (Please see the attached sketch.)

However, some drivers traveling north on South Columbia Street now use Briarbridge Lane as a short-cut to western destinations, instead of using Cameron Avenue, McCauley Street, or Franklin Street. It is because of this through traffic that a resident asked the Town to consider closing the Columbia Street access to Briarbridge Lane.

DiscussionAlternatives

The alternatives we considered for eliminating thru traffic on Briarbridge Lane were: posting signs prohibiting left turns from South Columbia Street; installing a median barrier on South Columbia Street to prevent left turns; or closing Briarbridge Lane to through traffic with a physical barrier.

Posting signs prohibiting left turns from South Columbia Street would eliminate only a portion of the thru traffic. It would not prevent determined drivers from ignoring the signs and using the street as a short-cut.

A median barrier on South Columbia Street would prevent all left turns onto Briarbridge Lane. However, the existing roadway cross-section at this location is not wide enough to permit a functional median and also maintain adequate traffic lanes. The State has also asked that no structure be located in the South Columbia Street right-of-way that would require removal when this portion of South Columbia Street is widened. A median or curb installed here would probably have to be removed when the street is improved.

Because of the close proximity to a principle arterial and the drivers perceived inconvenience of alternative routes, we think the installation of a physical barrier on Briarbridge Lane would be the most effective method of diverting traffic at this location. A gate, bollards, or a wall would obviate the continued enforcement necessary if only regulatory signs were used.

Response from Residents

We distributed notices to the residents of Briarbridge Lane and Briarbridge Valley Road to solicit comments on the proposed street closing. We received eleven responses in favor of closing the street. The only dissenting opinion at that time was from the Church of Christ. The church felt that access to and from Columbia Street was important to church operations. However, representatives of the church were receptive to closing the street if it could be done in such a manner as to allow adequate access to and from the church. If the street were closed at the location shown on the attached map, people attending functions at the church could enter the church parking lot from either Ransom Street or Columbia Street. (Please see the attached drawing.)

Representatives of the church have also tentatively agreed to install a concrete island centered in their driveway. An island at this location would prevent drivers from using the church driveway as a cut-through route.

After our original survey, one Briarbridge Lane resident changed his original opinion in favor of closing the street. He is now opposed to the proposal. The resident now feels that his existing driveway would not be accessible if he had to drive in from the low side of the hill, and thus is now opposed to closing the street to through traffic.

We agree with his concern about driveway access. A car with a long wheel base or low ground clearance may have difficulty turning into this driveway from the "downhill" side, which would be necessary if the road were closed to through traffic. However, the grade of the driveway could be changed to alleviate the problem. This resident has advised us that he does not want to change the grade of his driveway. He thinks that changing his driveway will adversely affect the appearance of his yard.

Other Responses

Input from Town departments was also solicited concerning the proposed closure of the intersection. There was some concern that a "dead end" street would be detrimental to the delivery of Town services such as snow removal and leaf collection.

In order to address the possible need for emergency and service vehicle access, we think the installation of a gate, instead of fixed barricades such as bollards or walls, would resolve any concerns with emergency and service vehicle access. It would also be relatively inexpensive. The estimated cost of installing a gate similar to the one shown is \$600.00.

The gate could be held in place by "drop pins", with perpetual maintenance provided by the, Town. Since Briarbridge Lane is a public right-of-way and the Town is ultimately responsible for traffic control on Town streets, the Town would purchase, install and maintain the gate.

Although the use of gates on public streets is not common in the United States, they have been used successfully in Great Britain for many years. We think the flexibility provided by a gate would be useful at this location.

Although there was significant response from the residents in favor of the proposal, there was some concern in the neighborhood regarding the aesthetics of "barricading" the street. We think a gate painted forest green, similar to the one shown on the attached sketch, would not be detrimental to the attractiveness of the neighborhood.

Since the Town does not anticipate the need to install barricades in other neighborhoods, nor do we think it appropriate to set a precedent for similar measures elsewhere, the gate would be designated as experimental. There would be an 18-month trial period in which the effectiveness of the gate would be evaluated.

Conclusion

If the Council adopts the attached resolution and ordinance, Briarbridge Lane would function as a local two-way street with access only from Ransom Street. No public right-of-way would be closed. This proposal would redirect traffic from a substandard street and thus eliminate the impact of through traffic on the neighborhood. Traffic would then be transferred to other streets such as Cameron Street, which can carry traffic more efficiently and safely than Briarbridge Lane. This proposal would also be designated as an experimental project which would be evaluated after a trial period of 18 months.

We think the installation of a gate has three distinct advantages:

1. It provides some flexibility for emergency and service vehicle access.
2. The relative cost is low, which means there would be little financial loss, if we and the local residents feel this method has been ineffective or unacceptable after the trial period.
3. This would not require acquisition of additional right-of-way (i.e. cul-de-sac).

There are only 5 driveways which access onto Briarbridge Lane. These 5 driveways plus the 5 lots which have access to Briarbridge Valley are well below the maximum 25 allowed in the Design Manual for a single access point.

Regarding the driveway access problem voiced by one resident, the driveway can be improved for adequate access and parking. This driveway is a short gravel driveway located mostly in the right-of-way. Only minor grading would be necessary to improve the entrance. If the resident prefers, the work on the driveway would be completed by Town forces at no cost to the resident. The approximate cost of the work would be \$500. We think regrading the driveway is a nominal consideration compared to the improvement in the neighborhood environment that would result from the elimination of through traffic. An alternative is for a driver to pull up the hill and back into the driveway. This would provide the same angle of entrance as now exists.

The gate would require periodic maintenance. It would also inhibit but not prevent some Town services.

Most class "C" residential streets are intended to provide access to areas directly dependent upon them. In this specific case, through traffic is especially troublesome because of the substandard roadway/design of Briarbridge Lane. It is for this reason we are recommending that the Council adopt the attached resolution and ordinance which would, in an experimental fashion, close one end of Briarbridge Lane.

Recommendation: The the Council adopt the attached ordinance and resolution.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 21 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES
(88-4-11/0-4)

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill:

SECTION I

That Section 21-10 of the Town Code of Ordinances, one-way streets is amended by deleting the following:

- (d) Traffic on Briarbridge Lane between Pittsboro Road and Briarbridge Valley shall move only in a northerly direction after entering the intersection at Pittsboro Road and Briarbridge Lane.

SECTION II

This ordinance shall be effective Monday, June 6, 1988.

SECTION III

All ordinances and portions of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

This the 11th day of April, 1988.

A RESOLUTION CLOSING BRIARBRIDGE LANE TO THROUGH TRAFFIC
(88-4-11/R-10)

WHEREAS, the Council is concerned with the impact of through traffic in residential areas; and

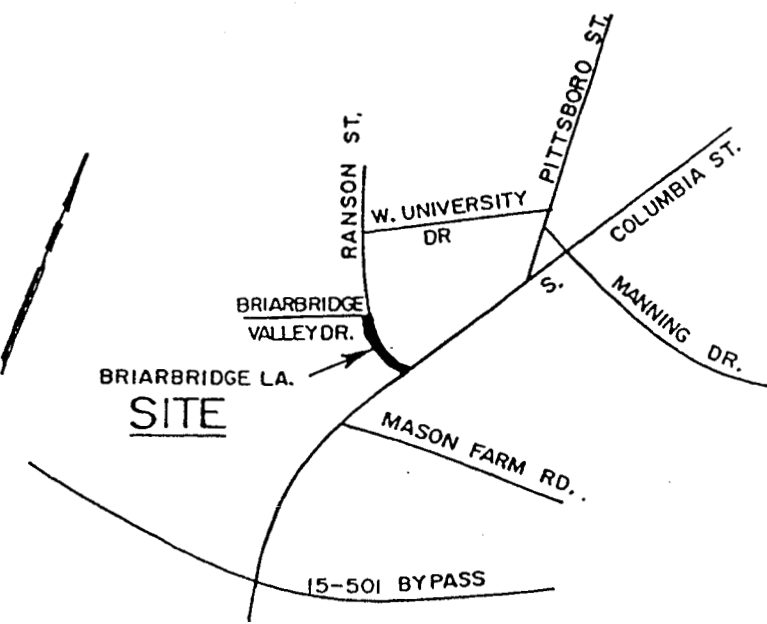
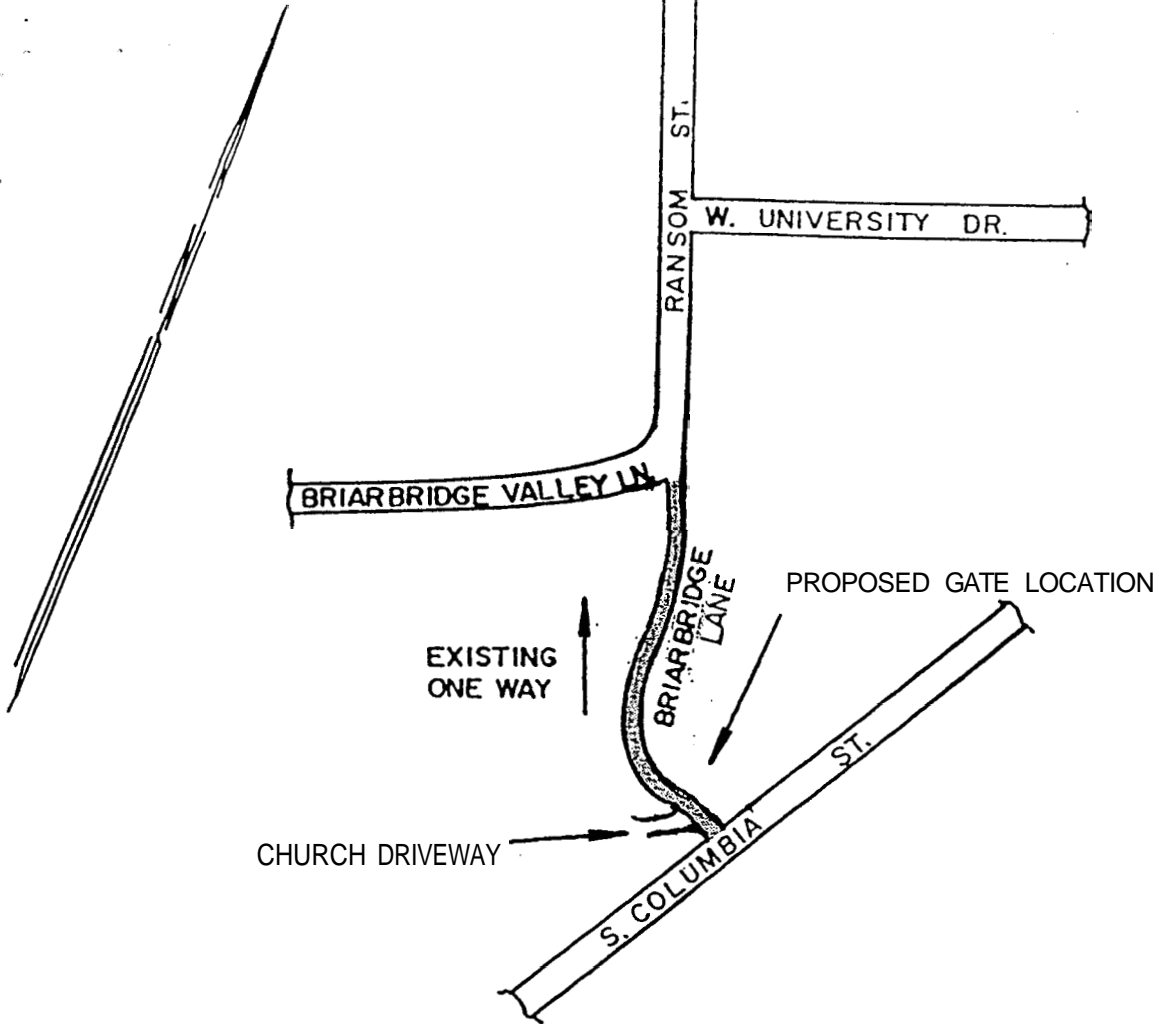
WHEREAS, the street known as Briarbridge Lane is not designed to safely carry through traffic other than local neighborhood vehicles ;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill that the Council hereby declares its intent to restrict the use of Briarbridge Lane as a through street.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Manager is hereby authorized to arrange for the installation of a gate on Briarbridge Lane adjacent to the driveway for the lot shown on Orange County Tax Map 87, Block J, Lot #11.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the installation of this gate shall be evaluated in 18 months or less and its efficiency in preventing through traffic considered.

This the 11th day of April, 1988.

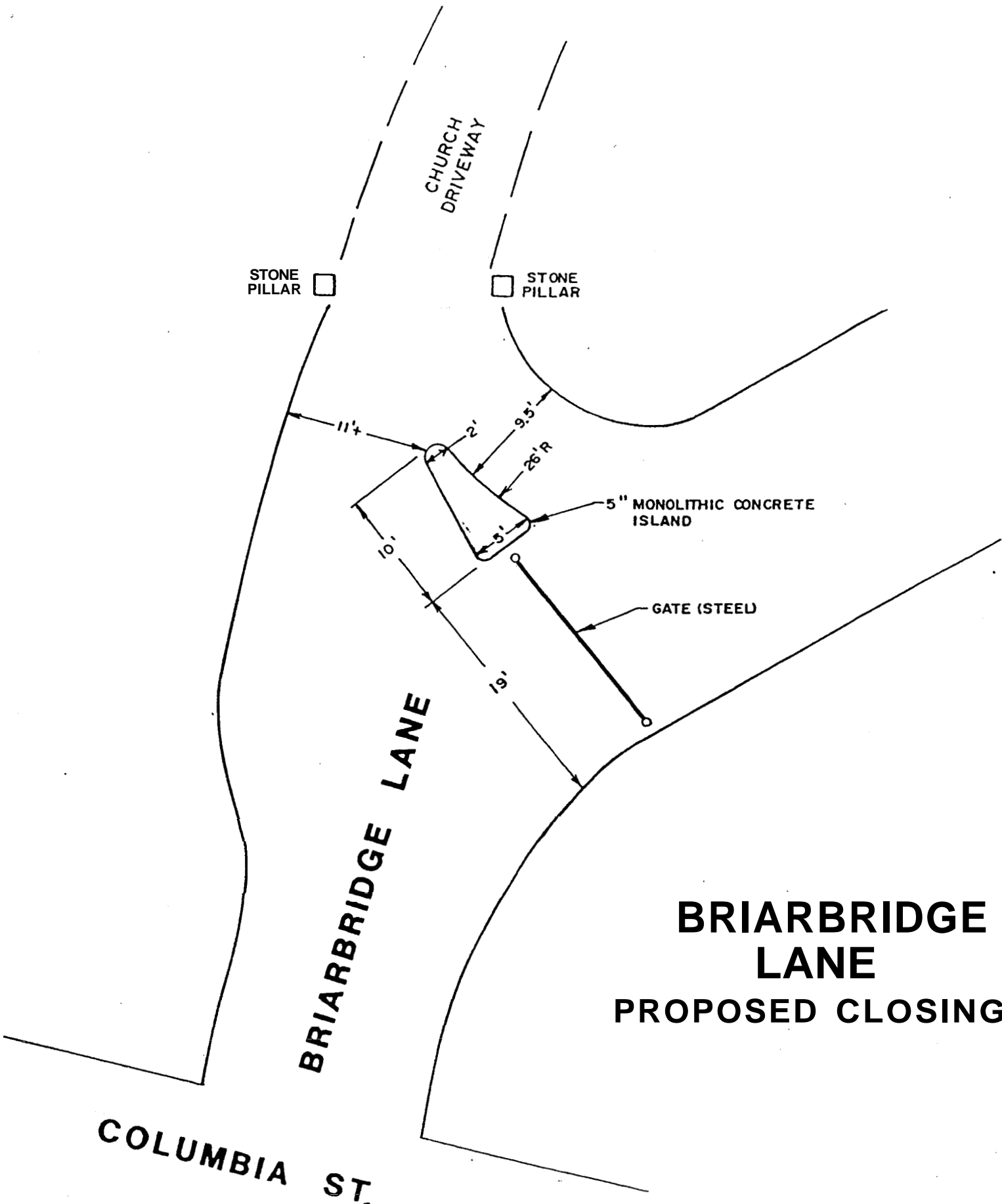


BRIARBRIDGE LANE

PROPOSED
NO THRU TRAFFIC

NO SCALE

VICINITY MAP
NO SCALE



CHURCH DRIVEWAY

STONE PILLAR

STONE PILLAR

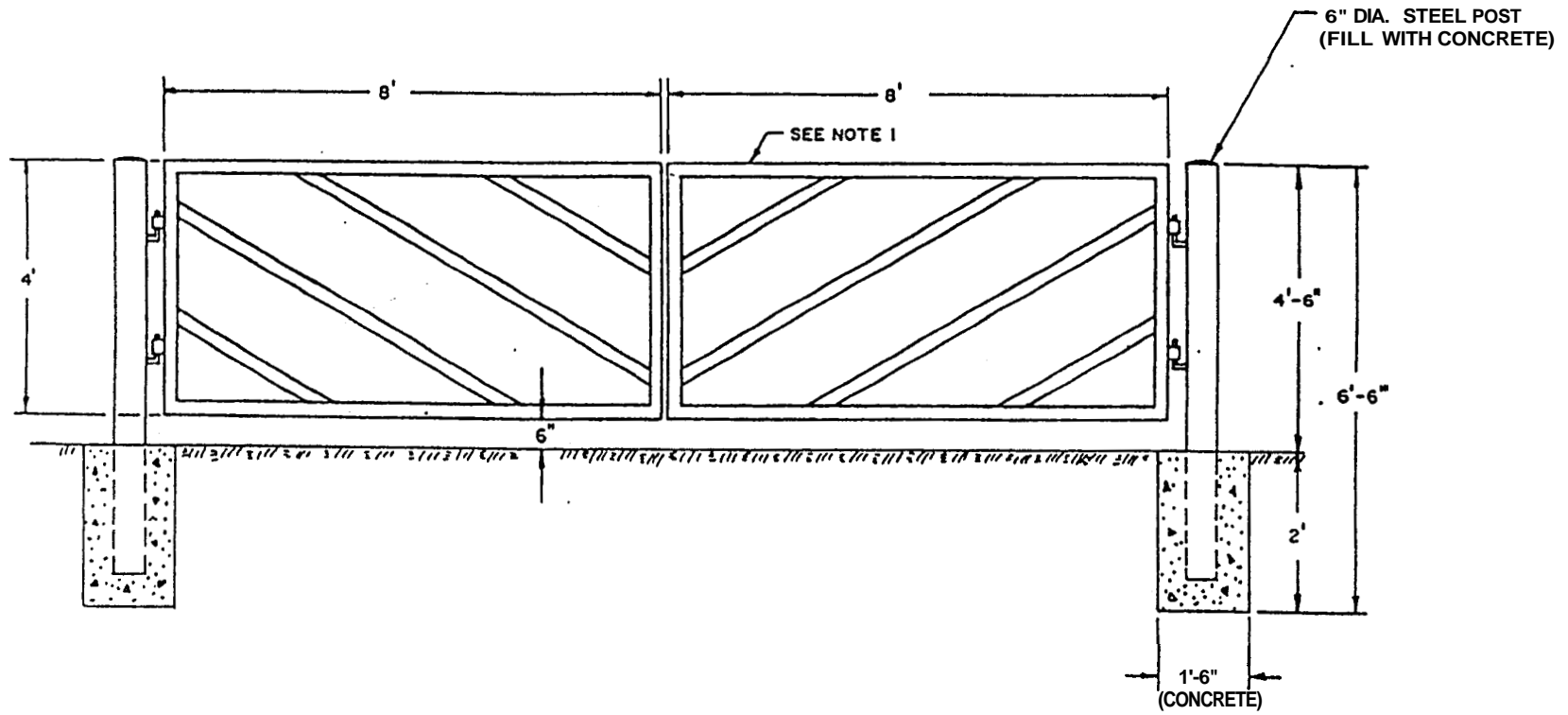
5" MONOLITHIC CONCRETE ISLAND

GATE (STEEL)

BRIARBRIDGE LANE

COLUMBIA ST.

BRIARBRIDGE LANE PROPOSED CLOSING



GATE DETAIL

BRIARBRIDGE LANE

NOTE I. GATE TO BE CONSTRUCTED OF 2"X2" SQUARE
STRUCTURAL STEEL TUBING, 1/8" WALL THICKNESS
PAINT FOREST GREEN

GEORGE
FYI

CHAPEL HILL CHURCH OF CHRIST

P. O. Box 4023

Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514

7 April 1988

Mr. Mike Taylor
Engineering Technician
Town of Chapel Hill
306 North Columbia Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27514-3699

Re: Briar Bridge Lane Closing

Dear Mr. Taylor:

With reference to your letter of 3 February 1988 and the attached drawings, this letter is to reaffirm the church's commitment to providing and paying for the 5" monolithic concrete island as described, contingent on an official decision to proceed with the closing of the street as proposed.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



Robert N. Broadus
(For The Chapel Hill
Church of Christ)