

Third Ward residents opposed to paving of Montclair's Afterglow Way

Yet another in a long line of "-gate" nicknames has been added to the Montclair lexicon.

Brick meets blacktop in the middle of Afterglow Way, on Tuesday, April 22.

Watergate, Bridgegate and Assessmentgate are now joined by "Afterglowgate."

Several residents of Afterglow Way spoke up during a 3rd Ward Community Meeting held on April 16, saying they were perturbed that a portion of their brick roadway had been paved over by a fellow resident.

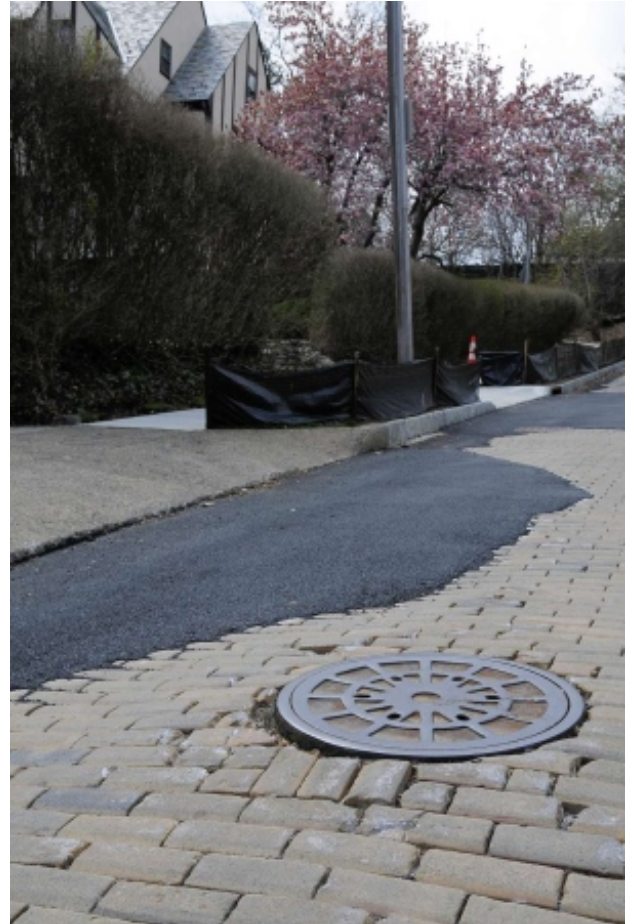
These residents were further concerned by the potential that the township may pave over the road in its entirety, and asked for their road to receive some sort of historic designation.

The residents' concern expressed during the ward meeting was spillover from a recent Township Council meeting in which other Afterglow Way residents voiced their displeasure with fellow resident, Thomas O'Beirne, who had paved off a section of the brick-covered street. O'Beirne, who attended the meeting, claimed that the paving was done to fix a chronic issue near his home.

O'Beirne, the owner of a paving company, cited the road's poor condition. He indicated that he had previously offered the township the labor necessary to pave over the entire road if it provided the supplies.

Third Ward Township Councilman Sean Spiller said that O'Beirne obtained all the necessary emergency permitting for the work he did and that the patch of road that was paved is secondary to the future of the road as a whole. If the township chooses to totally pave over the road, then concerns over the one piece will be moot, Spiller said. If the township decides that the bricks should stay, then the bricks removed from the one section of road will be put back, the councilman added.

O'Beirne has compiled road safety studies on Afterglow Way and the township will conduct its own private studies, observed Spiller. The councilman said that he understood residents' frustrations, but said that the municipal



government simply could not ignore a safety complaint.

Spiller indicated that if there is a way for the township to maintain the brick road, it will do so. An Afterglow-specific community meeting has been scheduled for Monday, May 19, at 7 p.m. in the Municipal Building.



Resident Patti Grunther, who coined the "Afterglowgate" term during the meeting, opined that there should be some sort of penalty should a resident claim a safety issue that turns out not to exist.

Building up

Community Policing Unit officer Frederick Cook of the Montclair Police Department attended the meeting to introduce himself to residents and answer questions.

The unit consists of four officers and a supervisor. The township has budgeted for two additional officers this year.

Residents' questions to Cook ranged from how patrol areas are determined, to what benefits he has seen community policing bring to the township, and whether it has aided in solving any major cases.

Cook said that patrol areas rotate. While community policing hasn't led to any major breaks in cases or spotting a major crime mid-act, Cook said that the main response he has received is residents being pleased that he and his fellow community policing officers are easily approachable. The goal, according to Cook, is to be accessible to the community and build relationships.

In addition to being a resource for residents to share their concerns, Spiller said, the township is exploring having officers reach out to residents on the street with basic municipal information.

While community policing is a year-round endeavor, officers will soon be joined by the Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, which is seasonal and organized during warm-weather months.

Trash issues

Among the other pieces of municipal news Spiller shared with residents was the township's planned increase of communication and regulation of trash receptacles.

As reported in The Times, residences are limited to three receptacles of a maximum size of 35 gallons or 50 pounds. The municipal Community Services Department has encountered issues with workers injuring themselves by lifting oversized loads. Workers were reaching into oversized receptacles to pull trash out, Spiller said, until one employee was recently stuck with a syringe.

The township will soon send out a notice to residents reminding them of municipal trash limits. Afterward, oversized cans will be marked by a sticker, but still collected on a temporary basis, Spiller said.

Down the line, oversized receptacles will not be collected at all, he said.

Contact Andrew Segedin at segedin@northjersey.com