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May 23, 2026

Re: Town maintenance concerns in Touisset

Members of the Town Council,

My wife and I moved to Touisset seven years ago this summer. Overall, we could not be more pleased to live both in this beautiful area and in the Town of Warren. Over the years, I have heard that there is a rift between the residents of Touisset and the Town when it comes to maintenance issues and the lack of services. Having lived here and experienced the lack of responsiveness to reported concerns and deficiencies, the sentiment is not without basis. Listed below are a few points of concern and some local perspectives to both illustrate ongoing issues and encourage dialogue.

- **General maintenance:** It has been over two years since I first reported the streetlight blinking all night on the corner of Maple and Privet Drive, which is visible from my home. When I reported it to DPW, Mr. Wheeler explained he would need to determine if it was in fact Town property. After weeks passed, I reached out again and was told it was indeed a Town light, and it would be added to the list. A year later when I reported that it was still blinking all night, I was told that an electrician had been sent out and it was fixed. I can assure you, it is still blinking. I have reported this annoying light at least three times and must have held five conversations about it with no results. If direct calls, emails, and using the Town app are not the right paths to follow, please advise me and I will do what is needed for relief. This is a good example of puzzling responses from a Town official and illustrates the frustration many here feel.
- **Trees:** While I have not counted recently, there are approximately 10 fully dead Town-owned trees that need removal along Touisset roadways. Over the years, some have fallen in the roadway during a storm, too rotten to stand, clearly dead for years. I find it puzzling to see the tall weeds along the roadway cut twice every year while trees that are both unsightly and dangerous remain standing. If even one or two are removed per year, progress would be made but year after year, some are half-removed, and most simply remain rotting away. Might we explore a community effort in which residents assist then keep the processed wood?
- **Roads.** Over the years, I like many have reported potholes in Touisset roads to DPW and was typically given excuses for their poor condition placing the blame primarily on Touisset residents. The problems were: through traffic to MA on Barton. Residents constantly remodeling and having materials delivered. Yard care companies and their big trailers. Amazon orders fulfilled by delivery trucks. Even Engine 6, the very apparatus charged with protecting our neighborhood from fire, was blamed for the road conditions despite the relatively rare amount of time it is on the road. I challenge all

members of the Council to simply type in my address and drive to and from my home, but the catch is you must stay in your lane at all times to experience what residents here experience every day. The road conditions have deteriorated from needing attention as described in the 2023 Pavement Management Program (inspections performed in 2022) to completely unacceptable. The DPW asphalt trailer did come through our area in late May after months of enduring large, open potholes that both damaged vehicles and caused traffic to drive in the opposite lane or the middle of the road to avoid the worst spots. This is unacceptable and a lawsuit waiting to happen. Not only did DPW not fill all of the holes (just the biggest ones), several places along Long Lane, Barton Avenue, Touisset Road, and Maple Road have degraded to the point where a simple shovel of asphalt will not suffice; they need a more substantial overlay. Given we have no representation on the Town Council, this issue may not be fully appreciated because none of the members endure the daily attack on their vehicles as residents here do. On the rare occasion that potholes are filled, the tar covered rocks leave tar stains on our vehicles that must be removed with a special cleaner, and the repair doesn't last long because it is not a proper fix nor is it sealed. In many ways, the cheapest fix has become the most expensive as surely the cost to fill the same pothole over and over has approached the cost to fix the roadway properly. When the current asphalt trailer was purchased some years ago, I was assured this was the answer to improved road maintenance, but this has not been the case as it rarely makes it into Touisset. Having a flat roadway free of large holes and long disintegrated sections that we struggle to avoid is not an unreasonable expectation. This includes not only paved roads, but the shell roads on Seaview Ave and Maple Rd which are falling even farther into disrepair.

Admittedly, I have not read the entire Warren Comprehensive Plan recently approved by the State, but after skimming over it, I did not see any verbiage that said, "pick the worst road on the list, and fix it," but surely there is an action plan for road maintenance. When nothing is done for years, these issues compound and become a seemingly insurmountable task, but doing nothing is simply not an option. An NTSB investigator referred to the job of reconstructing a crashed 737 as "eating the elephant" due to the enormous task they faced but then pointed out the only acceptable approach was "one bite at a time" because not taking any action was not an option. The deficiencies we experience here have risen to that level and the solution cannot be to do nothing, rather we must pick a tree or a road...the worst one...and address the issue.

The time has come to set aside old animosities and move forward with a plan dedicating a reasonable amount of funding to Touisset road maintenance and known hazards like tree removal. Many Touisset residents pay disproportionately high property taxes given the lack of services rendered for those taxes. Being a small town, I realize Warren has a limited taxation base so prioritization is key. Apparently the roads in Touisset are not a priority. While individual residents in the Historic District get special signage to prevent illegal parking and new blue street signs go up around town, Barton and Touisset Road fall farther and farther into disrepair.

I was once told by the former DPW director, "Touisset wants to be its own area until they need something, then they want to be part of Warren." This comment was derogatory. While we take pride in our unique landscapes, farms, and rural setting, we have always been and continue to be an important and crucial part of Warren with the same needs for basic maintenance as any other part of town. I could list the many ways we are far less a drain on Warren's financial resources than other parts of town, but it is more important to open a dialog and move forward with ideas and solutions than it is to create further division.

Thank you all for your time and consideration,

Tim White