

Woburn City Council Meeting – Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Good evening Mr. President, City Councilors and fellow Woburn residents.

My name is Chris Bortlik from 59 Harold Avenue in Woburn. I am here tonight on behalf of the Woburn Sound Barrier Committee. I am joined by Terri Keene from the Burlington Sound Barrier Committee, along with residents from Woburn and Burlington that are here with us this evening.

We are here to update you on our progress and to request that all citizens attend an important Sound Barrier Citizens' Public Meeting that is being held on Wednesday, March 14, 2007 at 7:00 PM in the Woburn Senior Center at 144 School Street.

In many ways, Woburn is fortunate to be at the intersection of routes 93 and 128. These are major highways that have brought many businesses, jobs and tax revenue to our city.

Unfortunately the success of these roads has come at a high cost to nearly a thousand residents that live in the many densely populated areas near the highway. For example, the original 4-lane section of route 128 that was first created in the mid-1950's came at the expense of many Woburn and Burlington houses and farm land that were taken via eminent domain. In the 1960's even more land and homes were taken as the highway needed to double from its previous 4 lane configuration to its current 8 lane design to meet the growth needs of this road.

Back in 1989 many sections of routes 93 and 128 were studied by Mass Highway and determined to have noise levels that were well in excess of decibel levels that are considered acceptable by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Noise from vehicles traveling on Routes 128 and 93 has gotten worse in recent years and is eroding our Quality of Life! Highway noise prevents a good night's sleep. Shrieking tires, engines and brakes make it virtually impossible to enjoy the "peace and comfort" in our homes and yards. To add insult to injury, vehicles can lose control and fly off the highway; land in a neighbor's yard; destroy property; and threaten the safety of residents and their families. Trash from the constant motion of vehicles and "litter bugs" who toss items carelessly out their windows, constantly accumulates in our yards and unexpected knocks on our doors in the middle of the night occur when there is a breakdown close by.

Despite many past petitions and attempts by various citizens, Mass Highway has refused to address these noise and safety issues. However, during this same period of time, Mass Highway has regularly found the means to add sound barriers to other areas near us, including those in Lynnfield and Wakefield, despite Woburn being higher on the list of cities requiring this mitigation.

The recent 93 and 128 interchange traffic and noise studies have confirmed what we have already known: this has been a serious safety and public health issue for too long!! We need Sound Barriers NOW!

The Woburn Sound Barrier Committee was formed in October 2006 and we have joined forces with our neighbors on the Burlington Sound Barrier Committee, as well as our elected state and local officials. Thus far, we have collectively gathered over 1,000 signatures of support. We have conducted 2 large joint rallies and have received significant media coverage from papers at the state and local levels.

We have great momentum and we need everyone to attend the Citizens' Public Meeting on March 14 so that together, we can speak out for sound barriers as a strong united voice! State

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Senator Robert Havern and Representatives Patrick Natale, Charles Murphy and Jay Kaufman will join Mayor McLaughlin, the Woburn Aldermen and the Burlington Selectmen at this event, in order to hear people's concerns, comments and ideas. Our state legislators are also working on securing state funding for Sound Barriers for our impacted neighborhoods! They will inform us about the steps required to get state funding and what our role will be to assist them to lobby for us.

Please help us send a strong message to Beacon Hill, urging them to give us Sound Barriers Now!

On behalf of the residents of Woburn and Burlington, I'd like to thank Senator Bob Havern and Representative Pat Natale for their strong leadership at the state house. George Laite, Senator Havern's district director, has provided his guidance and shared the successful formula that he and the Senator have already used to secure sound barriers for other cities in their district so that we can mirror this proven model. Mayor Tom McLaughlin continues to support us and has attended many of our rallies and meetings. Aldermen Joanna Gonsalves, John Ciriello, Darlene Mercer-Bruen and Jim Dwyer have regularly gone above and beyond the call of duty and have been the driving force behind the organization and mobilization of our resident group.

We thank all of you in advance for your continued support. We look forward to seeing everyone on Wednesday, March 14, 2007 at 7:00 PM in the Woburn Senior Center. Here are copies of the agenda for this meeting and a copy of the flyer that is being used to promote the meeting. This information is also published on our websites at www.WoburnSoundBarriers.com and www.BurlingtonSoundBarriers.com

I'd now like to invite a few of my fellow Woburn residents, and Terri Keene from Burlington, to briefly share some of their personal experiences and why they are working to obtain sound barriers for Woburn and Burlington.