**Scenic Road Designation**
PLPZ 2020 00090

To establish the “Binney Park Loop” comprising portions of Sound Beach Ave., between Arch St. to Wesskum Wood Road; Wesskum Wood Road, from Sound Beach Ave, to Arch St.; and Arch Street, from Wesskum Wood to Sound Beach Avenue as a Scenic Road per Chapter 11, Article 3 of the Town’s Charter.

**UPDATE:**

This application was last heard at the June 30, 2020 meeting where it was left open so that additional information could be provided to the Commission on two central questions – 1) what is intensive vehicular traffic and 2) does the Charter require one contiguous .5 stretch or are segments in combination acceptable?

The Commission requested DPW conduct traffic counts of the existing scenic roads. They provided the following information (see attached comments):

<table>
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<tr>
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Comments have also been provided by the BETA Group, the Commission’s traffic consultant, which provide background information on roadway classifications and the like.
ORIGINAL REPORT:
APPLICATION SUMMARY:

This applicant has submitted a request for Scenic Road Designation, to establish the “Binney Park Loop” as a Scenic Road per Chapter 11, Article 3 of the Town’s Charter. The Loop defined by the applicant includes portions of Sound Beach Avenue (from Arch St. to Wesskum Wood Road); Wesskum Wood Road (from Sound Beach Avenue to Arch Street); and Arch Street (from Wesskum Wood to Sound Beach Avenue).

Chapter 11, Article 3 of the Town’s Charter is attached herein. Section 11-10. - Designation standards, reads:

(a) To be designated as a scenic road, a highway or portion thereof must be free of intensive commercial development and intensive vehicular traffic. A portion of a highway must be at least one-half (1/2) mile in length to be designated as a scenic road.
(b) In addition to the requirements of Subsection (a) above, to be designated as a scenic road a highway or portion thereof must meet at least one (1) of the following criteria:
   (1) It is unpaved;
   (2) It is bordered by mature trees or stone walls;
   (3) The traveled portion is no more than twenty (20) feet in width;
   (4) It offers scenic views;
   (5) It blends naturally into the surrounding terrain; or
   (6) It parallels or crosses over brooks, streams, lakes or ponds.
(c) No highway or portion thereof may be designated as a scenic road unless the owners of a majority of lot frontage abutting the highway or portion thereof agree to the designation by filing a written statement of approval with the Town Clerk.

STAFF COMMENTS:

1) The Commission must decide whether this proposal complies with Section 11-10(a) of Chapter 11, Article 3 of the Town’s Charter, which addresses Scenic Roads. Is the road free of intensive traffic and does the roadway meet the requirement to be at least 1/2 mile in length?
2) Intensive vehicular traffic: The applicant’s argument is that “intensive vehicular traffic” is not expressly defined. There is no disagreement that if statutory words are not defined then it must be interpreted using the ordinary or common-sense interpretation of the word(s).
   a. The applicant has stated that they intend to describe their thoughts on this at the Public Hearing, but in the mean time have provided traffic counts in both March and May of 2020, presumably conducted by them. Their analysis concluded that the average daily traffic is 417 cars at peak times.
   b. The timing of the traffic counts is of some concern given the impact from the corona virus. As a point of reference, the traffic signal at Sound Beach Avenue and Route 1 total volume counts, meaning a combined number of cars
on Route 1 and on Sound Beach Avenue, from the last Thursday, Friday and Saturday of May in 2020 and 2019 demonstrate that there has been a significant reduction in traffic.

Thurs 5/30/19 – 36,683  
Fri 5/31/19 – 38,268  
Sat 6/1/19 – 32,366

Thurs 5/28/20 – 23,046  
Fri 5/29/20 – 25,467  
Sat 5/30/20 – 24,136

Thurs – 37.2% reduction  
Fri – 33.5% reduction  
Sat – 25.4% reduction

c. Attached are the traffic counts for roads within Greenwich obtained from the CTDOT website. [https://portal.ct.gov/DOT/PP_SysInfo/Traffic-Monitoring](https://portal.ct.gov/DOT/PP_SysInfo/Traffic-Monitoring). Of note is that Sound Beach Avenue is ranked 8th amongst the busiest roads in Town, behind Arch Street, Field Point Road, Mill Street, King Street, Lake avenue, North Street, and Bruce Park Avenue (see attached counts).

d. Attached is a roadway classification map published on the Ct. Department of Transportation (DOT) website. Sound Beach Avenue is classified as an Urban Collector. The DOT’s Highway Design Manual is based on the functional classification concept. They have classified all public highways and streets within Connecticut. The heaviest volume roads are called arterials. Arterial highways are characterized by a capacity to quickly move relatively large volumes of traffic. They are sometimes deliberately restricted in their service to abutting properties. The arterial functional class is subdivided into principal and minor categories for rural and urban areas. They include highways and expressways. The next level is called Collectors. Collector routes are characterized by a roughly even distribution of their access and mobility functions. Traffic volumes and speeds will typically be somewhat lower than those of arterials. In urban areas, collectors act as intermediate links between the arterial system and points of origin and destination. Urban collectors typically penetrate residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. Local bus routes will often include collector streets. Sound Beach Avenue is classified as an Urban Collector. The other roads in the Loop are classified as local roads. The other roads designated as scenic roads in Town include Cliffdale Road, Burying Hill, and Selden Road. They are all classified as “Local Roads”.

3) Road Length Segment: It appears based on the language in the Charter regarding Scenic Roads that each highway segment must be designated individually similar to how zoning must be applied to individual parcels and every parcel in a rezoning request must be reviewed individually. The same would appear to apply to the
highways. If the Commission agrees with that interpretation, this proposal would be viewed as 3 individual requests. In this instance, each segment is less than one-half mile and would not comply with the Charter.

4) Section 11-10. - Designation standards (c) reads, “No highway or portion thereof may be designated as a scenic road unless the owners of a majority of lot frontage abutting the highway or portion thereof agree to the designation by filing a written statement of approval with the Town Clerk.” To satisfy this requirement the applicant submitted the signed statements of approval to the Town Clerk’s Office.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ISSUES:

1) The first issue for the Commission to resolve is whether the proposed Binney Loop meets at least one of the designation standards e.g., scenic views, stone walls and trees.

2) The applicant stated they intend to present their argument on whether the proposed loop is free of intensive vehicular traffic to the Commission at the Public Hearing. Depending on what is presented, the Commission may want to request review and comment from the Beta Group, the Commission’s traffic consultant, on the information provided.

3) The Charter reads that a copy of the application should be given to the Board of Selectmen, the Commissioner of Public Works, the Superintendent of the Highway Division and the Tree Warden. This proposal was presented to the Board of Selectman earlier this year, who suggested it go to the RTM to consider and act upon the following resolution: RESOLVED, the First Selectman is authorized to sign a Scenic Road Approval Form to accompany an Eastern Greenwich Preservation Association application to the Planning and Zoning Commission. At the March 9, 2020 RTM meeting, a vote of 94 in favor –76 against –3 abstentions was taken on said resolution. The issue of intensive traffic was discussed at that meeting, and it was successfully argued that the Planning and Zoning Commission is the authority to make that determination and not the RTM, hence the reason it was moved forward. The Commission may want to request comments from the other Departments noted above.

4) Lastly, on a procedural point, notice of this application followed the current Executive Orders issued by the Governor of the State of Connecticut in response to the corona virus and did not follow the language of the Charter with respect to notice. It reads: To designate a highway or portion thereof as a scenic road, the Planning and Zoning Commission must first hold a public hearing. Notice of the time and place of the hearing shall be published in a newspaper having a substantial circulation in the Town at least twice, at intervals of not less than two (2) days, the first not more than fifteen (15) days, nor less than ten (10) days, and the last not less than two (2) days before the date of the hearing. A copy of the notice, together with a list of all owners of lot frontage abutting the proposed scenic road, shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to each owner of lot frontage abutting the proposed scenic
road, and shall be given to the Board of Selectmen, the Commissioner of Public Works, the Superintendent of the Highway Division and the Tree Warden. The Executive Order clearly states that it applies to all “covered laws”, which is why they Executive Order was followed.
At the request of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Town has completed traffic counts of all scenic roads in Town. The counts were conducted between July 6, 2020 and July 14, 2020. Please note that these counts may be slightly reduced due to the fact that the State of Connecticut is in Phase 2 of COVID-19 Reopening of CT along with schools being out of session. Below is a summary chart.

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In addition, the Town conducted traffic counts during the similar period on the following roads noted as part of this request and the dates the counts were conducted.

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* Conducted at the same time as the existing scenic Road Counts

** Conducted two weeks later due to the availability of the traffic counting equipment
To assist in determining whether the vehicular traffic along Sound Beach Avenue is “intensive” there are a number of factors that can be considered, including but not limited to the following:

1. **Average Daily Traffic Volumes**: Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes, expressed in vehicles per day (VPD), are the most basic measure of demand for a given roadway segment. ADT can be calculated when continuous traffic counts are available or can be estimated based on occasional counts and adjusted with factors to account for variations in season, month, and/or day of the week.¹ When possible, though, an effort is made to collect data on an “average” day. According to the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) information for the Town of Greenwich developed as part of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) count program, traffic volumes along Sound Beach Ave. in the vicinity of Binney Park are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Daily Traffic Volume (VPD)</th>
<th>Specific Location Collected</th>
<th>Functional Classification for roadway segment at count location</th>
<th>Date Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>Just Northwest of Lockwood Rd./Center Dr.</td>
<td>Collector</td>
<td>October, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*14,700</td>
<td>Just Southeast of Lockwood Rd/Center Dr.</td>
<td>Collector</td>
<td>June, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>Just north of Lockwood Ave.</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>October, 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This location is closest to the segment of Sound Beach Ave. proposed to be designated as a scenic road.
See Attachment A for CTDOT’s ADT map for Greenwich.

Additional daily traffic count data was compiled by the Town and documented in a memo Re: Binney Park Scenic Road Loop dated July 28, 2020. The data shows that ADTs observed at various times on Sound Beach Avenue (shown in the memo) are similar to those reported as part of the CTDOT count program (shown in the table above).

Note that traffic data collection for the planning/engineering design industry is not currently being done as usual (since March, 2020) due to the impacts that Covid-19 has had on typical behaviors and travel patterns. The Connecticut Department of Transportation posted the following information in April, 2020: “Considering the effect the Covid-19 crisis has had on traffic volumes, existing traffic counts for use in Department traffic impact studies (including Office of the State Traffic Administration Major Traffic Generator submissions) and projects should not be conducted until

further notice." Therefore, traffic data that has been collected in recent months should be carefully considered in context with historical sources.

2. **Roadway Functional Classification** - Sound Beach Avenue is classified as a “collector” roadway and is located in an urbanized area according to the Functional Classification (FC) mapping prepared by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. (See Attachment B.) The following information about collectors has been excerpted from the CTDOT’s Highway Design Manual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collector</th>
<th>ADT Volumes</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Putnam Ave., just east of Sound Beach Ave.</td>
<td>14,900 VPD</td>
<td>Principle Arterial- Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Putnam Ave., just west of Laddins Rock Rd.</td>
<td>12,500 VPD</td>
<td>Principle Arterial- Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Point Rd., north of Soundview Dr.</td>
<td>12,600 VPD</td>
<td>Minor Arterial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Park Ave., just east of Greenwich Ave.</td>
<td>12,000 VPD</td>
<td>Minor Arterial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delavan Ave., just west of I-95,</td>
<td>13,900 VPD</td>
<td>Minor Arterial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North St., just north of Doubling Rd.</td>
<td>12,400 VPD</td>
<td>Principle Arterial- Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North St., just south of Doubling Rd.</td>
<td>13,700 VPD</td>
<td>Principle Arterial- Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deerfield Dr., just south of Glenville Rd.</td>
<td>12,400 VPD</td>
<td>Minor Arterial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Ave., just north of Glenville Rd.</td>
<td>14,000 VPD</td>
<td>Minor Arterial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Field Rd., just north of I-95 Northbound ramps</td>
<td>11,300</td>
<td>Minor Arterial</td>
</tr>
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To put the daily traffic volumes and functional classification of Sound Beach Ave. into the context of the Greenwich transportation network, the ADT and FC maps were reviewed to identify 1) segments with similar traffic volumes to compare their functional classification with that of Sound Beach Ave., and 2) segments with the same “collector” classification as Sound Beach Ave to compare their Average Daily Traffic with that of the Sound Beach Ave. Note that the lists shown below are fairly complete, although not exhaustive. Refer to Attachments A and B for the full source data.

It was found that Greenwich roadway segments that have similar ADT volumes to Sound Beach Ave. (14,700 VPD in the segment closest to the proposed scenic roadway designation) have higher classifications such as:

- East Putnam Ave., just east of Sound Beach Ave., 14,900 VPD (Principle Arterial- Other)
- East Putnam Ave., just west of Laddins Rock Rd., 12,500 VPD (Principle Arterial- Other)
- Field Point Rd., north of Soundview Dr., 12,600 VPD (Minor Arterial)
- Bruce Park Ave., just east of Greenwich Ave., 12,000 VPD (Minor Arterial)
- Delavan Ave., just west of I-95, 13,900 VPD (Minor Arterial)
- North St., just north of Doubling Rd., 12,400 VPD (Principle Arterial- Other)
- North St., just south of Doubling Rd., 13,700 VPD (Principle Arterial- Other)
- Deerfield Dr., just south of Glenville Rd., 12,400 VPD (Minor Arterial)
- Lake Ave., just north of Glenville Rd., 14,000 VPD (Minor Arterial)
- Indian Field Rd., just north of I-95 Northbound ramps, 11,300 (Minor Arterial)

It was found that other roadway segments in Greenwich that are classified as collectors (as Sound Beach Ave. is for the segment proposed to be classified as a scenic road) have ADT volumes that are lower than those that were observed on Sound Beach Ave.:
• Laddins Rock Rd., *just south of East Putnam Ave.*, **5,800 VPD** (Collector)
• Havemeyer Ln., *just north of East Putnam Ave.*, **9,900 VPD** (Collector)
• Riverside Ave., *just south of the Metro North Rail Line*, **4,400 VPD** (Collector)
• West End Ave. *just west of Sound Beach Ave.*, **5,100 VPD** (Collector)
• Fairfield Rd., *just East of Old Church Rd.*, St **6,500 VPD** (Collector)
• Mason St., *just South of East Putnam Ave.*, **6,400 VPD** (Collector)
• East Elm St., *just East of Mason St.*, **2,300 VPD** (Collector)
• Brookside Dr., *North of West Putnam Ave.*, **4,000 VPD** (Collector)
• Prospect St., *just South of West Putnam Ave.*, **4,300 VPD** (Collector)
• Weaver St., *just South of Glennville Rd.*, **4,900 VPD** (Collector)
• Water St., *just north of Mill St.*, **4,800 VPD** (Collector)
• Clapboard Ridge Rd., *just east of Round Hill Rd.*, **900 VPD** (Collector)

Additionally, the roadways in Town that are currently designated as scenic were reviewed in order to determine how their functional classifications and traffic volumes compared to Sound Beach Ave. According to the Town’s 2019 Plan of Conservation and Development⁴, the following roadways in Greenwich have been designated as scenic roads:

- Cliffordale Road
- Burying Hill Road
- Selden Lane
- Buckfield Lane
- Sawmill Lane

All of these roadways are classified as “local” and although no traffic volumes are available from the CTDOT count program for any of these segments⁵ daily traffic count data was collected by the Town in July, 2020 for these roadways and documented in a memo Re: Binney Park Scenic Road Loop dated July 28, 2020. While considering that those traffic volumes may not represent a typically average value due to the impact of Covid 19 shutdowns as well as the summer seasonal variation, the data show that daily traffic volumes on the scenic road segments are significantly lower than those observed on Sound Beach Avenue during the same July, 2020 time period. The highest daily traffic volume observed on one of the existing scenic roads was for Burying Hill Road, where 793 vehicles were counted, which is less than 10% of the 13,034 vehicles counted on Sound Beach Avenue.

3. **Emergency Services**- There is a fire station located on Sound Beach Avenue approximately 1/4 mile south of Binney park and fire trucks use Sound Beach Avenue as a primary route to respond to emergencies.

4. **Bus Routing**- There is a CTTransit route (324) that travels along Sound Beach Ave and Laddins Rock Road in the vicinity of Binney Park. The following is a portion of CTTransit’s Stamford Area service map⁶:

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⁵ CTDOT data collection efforts focus on higher classification roadways that are important for the regional roadway network and thus traffic counts are not typically conducted on “local” roadways
Sound Beach Ave. also likely serves a number of school bus routes from year to year as Old Greenwich School is located on Sound Beach Ave. to the south of Binney Park, and Riverside Elementary School and Eastern Middle School are located on Hendrie Ave. to the west of Binney Park.

5. **Capacity/Level of Service** - The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) (6th Edition) is the industry standard for evaluating capacity and Level of Service (LOS) for roadways and other multimodal facilities. The Manual includes generalized daily service volume tables for various facility types to be used for “generalized planning and preliminary engineering analysis.” The tables for “Urban Street” and “Two-Lane Highway” facilities are shown below.

The segment of Sound Beach Ave. proposed for designation as a scenic road is a two-lane section with striped shoulders and a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour. There are sidewalks on both sides of the roadway and uncontrolled midblock crosswalks at two locations. There is a non-standard mini-roundabout intersection with Laddins Rock Rd/Harding Rd. as well as various sidestreet and driveway intersections with stop-control on the minor approaches to Sound Beach Ave. There are no traffic signals in the immediate vicinity of the proposed scenic roadway, although there is a signalized intersection to the north at East Putnam Ave. and to the south at West End Ave./Arcadia Rd.

Sound Beach Ave. does not quite fit the description for either the “Urban Street” facility type or the “Two-Lane Highway” facility type as presented in the HCM, although the Generalized Daily Service Volume charts shown below are still useful for providing a sense of the LOS these similar facility
types typically operate at for a range of daily traffic volumes (and K and D factors\(^7\)). The observed traffic volume on Sound Beach Ave. is 14,700 vehicles per day. That volume corresponds to a Level of Service E for a typical two-lane Urban Street Facility with a posted speed of 30 miles per hour and to a Level of Service D for a Class II-Rolling Two-Lane Highway.

6. **Existing Land Use and Roadway Network** - The land use map of Old Greenwich from the Town’s 2019 Plan of Conservation and Development (See Attachment C) shows fairly dense development in the neighborhood with a variety of land uses. Major traffic attractions in the area include the Old Greenwich metro-north train station, I-95 interchange 5, commercial areas along East Putnam Ave.,

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\(^7\) According the 6th Edition of the HCM, a K-factor is the proportion of daily traffic that occurs during the peak hour, and D-factor is the proportion of traffic moving in the peak direction of travel on a given roadway during the peak hour.
the shore line and beach areas, the commercial/business area centered at the intersection of Sound Beach Ave. at West End Ave./Arcadia Rd., the Perrot Memorial library, a number of churches, Old Greenwich School, Civic and community centers, and a golf club, all filled in with residential areas. The roadway network consists of a grid-type layout with numerous sidestreets and driveways along Sound Beach Ave. that provide access to and from the neighborhood’s numerous attractions and residences. The types and intensities of land use in the area contribute to the high traffic volumes observed along Sound Beach Ave. However, as is the nature of traffic flow on a collector-type roadway, traffic flow in the Sound Beach Ave. corridor is not smoothly free-flowing. Rather, as drivers turn into and out of the numerous local side streets and driveways in the corridor en route to their various destinations, friction results in the Sound Beach Ave. traffic flow as travel speeds vary and numerous potential conflict points and localized areas of delay are created.

Therefore, based on all of these factors, the vehicular traffic along Sound Beach Ave. in the vicinity of the segments proposed for scenic road designation could reasonably be thought of as intensive, particularly given that it is a two-lane roadway classified as a collector.

A few additional factors may be relevant when considering the Town Code as it pertains to the designation scenic roads:

- **Scenic Road Designations for State Highways vs. Town Roads** - The state highway network is made up of numbered routes that are typically higher classification/higher volume roadways and that provide for regional connectivity and access to major transportation facilities. The process and criteria for designating a town road in Greenwich (such as Sound Beach Ave.) as scenic are different from the process and criteria for designating a segment of a state highway (such as the Merritt Parkway) as scenic.

  Chapter 11 Article 3 of the Greenwich municipal code details the scenic road designation requirements for town roads in Greenwich. The code establishes the Planning and Zoning Commission as the authority to designate town roads as scenic and provides standard criteria for designation including that the roadway portion proposed for scenic designation must be free of intensive commercial development and intensive vehicular traffic, and also must be at least one-half mile in length.

  Sec.13b-31c of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies details the scenic road designation requirements for state highways. The process for designation of state highways as scenic is overseen by the Connecticut Department of Transportation Commissioner with the assistance of an advisory committee. Sec. 13b-31c-5 of the Regulations states that the proposed scenic road segment shall have a minimum length of 1 mile, shall have development compatible with its surroundings, and makes no reference to traffic volumes or intensity.8

- **Segment Length** - Sec. 11-10 of the Town Code states that “A portion of a highway must be at least one-half (1/2) mile in length to be designated as a scenic road.” The application to Planning and Zoning to designate the Binney Park Scenic Loop states that the loop consists of a contiguous 0.6 mile roadway. However, the loop is actually comprised of three segments of fairly distinct

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roadways, with each segment less than one-half mile in length: Sound Beach Ave. (0.25 miles), Wesskum Wood Rd. (0.13 miles), and Arch St. (0.22 miles).

- **Planning and Zoning Commission Approval** - Section 99 of Town Charter requires Planning and Zoning Commission approval of public works projects. Regardless of whether or not a roadway is designated as scenic, Planning and Zoning Commission approval is needed for any action to be taken (beyond studies) for any proposed street redesign project.

- **Other designations** - There may be other more appropriate types of designations that could be sought for the Binney Park area to help protect its character outside of the roadway right-of-way.