

Letters

Logging on Tucker Mountain Road

Donna Baker-Hartwell

Tucker Mountain Road residents have experienced a number of large logging projects over the past ten or more years. As a resident, there are many challenges that come along with these projects: the meeting and passing of fully loaded logging trucks on narrow sections of the road that are often on blind corners; icy, muddy or dusty road conditions that are worsened by the heavy trucks; the added wear and tear on the road, and the addition of loud noises – lots of noise that disrupt the peace and quiet.

I think for the most part, we have been very tolerant. But, we are tired. There seems to be no limit to how long these projects last and/or how early in the morning or late in the day they operate. For these reasons, I am writing this letter to the Beacon.

5 AM Wake-Up Call

On September 3, at 5 AM, I awoke to the sounds of a logging project just below our home. It is a sound that you can not sleep through. I would later research web sites and estimate that the noise level of a wood chipper and log saw is somewhere around 85-112 decibel (dB). A decibel is a logarithmic unit of measure often used in measuring magnitudes of sound. In the city of

Manchester, no noise over 55 dB is allowed before 7 AM or after 10 PM. In the town of Andover, we have a Noise Ordinance that states that, “It shall be unlawful for ... unusual noise disturbances which... annoys or endangers the comfort, repose, health, peace or safety ...between the hours of 10:30 PM and 7 AM Monday through Saturday and 8 AM on Sunday.” I believe that this activity was at an hour that is unlawful.

I wrote a letter to our Select Board members and got 23 signatures from other residents on the road asking that the logging operation abide by our town noise ordinance. There are 20 homes on Tucker Mountain. Many of these homes are occupied by young families with children. We pay taxes and we elect board members to represent us and oversee the business of our town. We hope that they do so in our best interest.

Ordinance Loopholes

After delivering our letter and meeting with the Select Board and the logger, it became apparent that the current Noise Ordinance has loopholes. These loopholes allow the Select Board to grant the logging company exemption from the noise ordinance.

#1. Under exemptions – “any other noise resulting from activities of temporary duration....” The word temporary opens up a wide range of interpretation. Logging is a portable industry by nature. Once the logger has cleared an area he/she must move the equipment to

the next job. But does portable equate temporary? This is a noise ordinance not an industry ordinance. Is noise that continues for 6-8 weeks to be considered temporary? The office of the Attorney General of New Hampshire, when asked this question, told me that seven to ten days might be considered temporary when it comes to noise. The recent logging project on Tucker Mountain Road lasted 34 days.

#2. The logger told the board that logging is considered agriculture and is exempted from the noise ordinance. The “harvesting” of lumber might be considered an agricultural industry but nowhere on the town noise ordinance is logging or agriculture listed as a category for exemption. The bottom line is that our current noise ordinance is vague and confusing. Interpreting it is left to the discrepancy of the select board.

Grateful for 6 AM Concession

The meeting ended with the logger agreeing to start work at 6 AM instead of 5 AM. However, it was clear to me that our three Select Board members are 100 percent behind the logging industry. It was a concession offered by the logger that set the start time an hour later. I am grateful for his decency and his willingness to make a compromise with us.

I have to say that I am really disappointed in the lack of consideration for Andover residents, taxpayers and families by our elected officials. I still believe that we have a right to peace and quiet during the hours that we most need it. The noise ordinance states, and every noise ordinance that I have read across the state of New Hampshire begins with the acknowledgment, that loud noises “detrimentally affect public health, comfort, safety, welfare and prosperity...”

I hope that in the future, we can build a better relationship with the logging industry and the logging industry will build a better relationship with residents. I hope that our town ordinance can be clarified and amended by voters. I hope we will continue to discuss the issue of noise as it relates to the quality of our lives – today and into the future.

.....
TOWN MATTERS!
.....
The *Beacon* needs volunteers to help with reporting about town news and/or taking pictures around town.
Do as much or as little as suits your schedule, but please help!
The *Beacon* is not just *about* our community – it's *by* our community!
Call Shelley at 735-6099
.....

Retirement
RECEPTION

Please join us as we celebrate **Bruce P. King, NLH CEO and President** for his dedication and commitment to the patients and community throughout his career.

We invite all to join us for this community-wide open house style retirement reception.

**THURSDAY
DECEMBER 5
5:00 - 7:00 PM**

Remarks at 6:00 PM.
New London Hospital Main Lobby
Light refreshments served.

To RSVP, please visit
newlondonhospital.org/king.