

Mail now within reach of Hwy. 33 residents

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Town of Port Washington residents living along Highway 33 no longer have to cross the busy four-lane highway to get their mail.

Town Chairman Jim Melichar announced recently that the dangerous situation had been rectified and the neighborhood mailbox moved to the driveway at Stevlin's Hardware on the north side of the highway, where most residents live.

"It's not 100% what the residents want, but the residents won't have to cross four lanes of traffic any more," Melichar told the Town Plan Commission Dec. 13.

The problem began when Highway 33 was reconstructed from a two-lane road to a four-lane highway, prompting the U.S. Postal Service to discontinue home mail delivery. Postal officials said the new road is too dangerous for postal carriers to drop mail off at houses, noting there is no shoulder where carriers can safely pull over when delivering mail to individual boxes.

A group mailbox was placed on Jackson Road, forcing residents on the north side of the highway to cross four lanes of traffic, travel east to the city limits and then south on Jackson Road about 100 feet to collect their mail from a metal box with about a dozen locked compartments.

"I was told this was done for the safety of postal personnel. What about the safety of the people who have to walk across a four-lane highway to get their mail?" Highway 33 resident Norbert Ansay asked the Town Board last month.

Melichar said he talked to officials from the Department of Transportation, which designed and built the highway, as well as City of Port Washington without success.

He met with a postal official at the site, but was only successful after he saw the mail carrier and asked how she felt about moving the box.

"She said, 'I don't care,'" Melichar said. Stevlin's owner Steve Boyea had no problem with moving the mailbox to a site off his driveway, Melichar said, so the box was transferred.

The new location may force officials to deal with another thorny issue — plowing the sidewalk and bike path along Highway 33 in the township, Melichar said.

"I think long-term we're going to have to address that sidewalk," he said. "The resident think it would be easier if they want to walk to the mailbox."

The town does not require residents to clear sidewalk in front of their properties, officials said, in large part because there aren't sidewalks along town roads.

Melichar said recently that since the sidewalk and bike path are in the right-of-way, they are the responsibility of the DOT, and DOT officials said they believed the Village of Saukville would

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clear the walkways west of the City of Port Washington limits. The village, however, said that is not its responsibility.

Supr. Jim Rychtik, a member of the Plan Commission, suggested the town have its private plowing contractor clear the walkways, but Melichar said the township should wait until it receives a legal opinion from its attorney about potential liability.