

Center Street Residents Take Action Illegal Signs Are Replaced

Center Street signs return to correct signage

There were signs at the Warren Street end of Center Street that had been illegally replaced. The signs originally at the ends of Center Street specified there was a 4 ton weight limit for trucks on Center Street. The original signs were replaced with signs that read: *trucks over 8,000 lbs, empty weight, are not allowed to use Center Street.* Using the phrase “empty weight” would allow trucks up to 10 tons to use Center Street.

Residents of Center Street signed individual petitions which were presented at the December 6, 2022 Phillipsburg Town Council Meeting. In addition to the individual petitions, speakers Rebecca Place, Sandra Morrisette and David Morrisette spoke about the problem of the signs being changed. Also, a more detailed report was handed to Council President Harry Wyant, Town Attorney Richard Wenner and Councilman Lee Clark.

The sign at the end of Center Street, and another sign on Warren Street at the intersection of Warren Street and Center Street, have now been replaced with more other signage. Although the signage is more accurate than what was illegally installed by the town, the signage still does not accurately reflect what residents were requesting in terms of making the signs to more accurately reflect the town ordinance on weight restrictions and local delivery restriction.

Residents requested the signs to replace the illegal signs reflect that the 4 tons is gross vehicle weight and trucks over 4 tons should enter Center Street for local deliveries only. It is important to note, at this point the signs still do not accurately reflect the town code.

The change back to the more appropriate signage is the result of the residents of Center Street taking action to see that the correct signage was put back where it belongs.



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What is

Phillipsburg Environmental Watch?

Phillipsburg Environmental Watch is a grassroots organization under the umbrella of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition. Our mission is to support the environment and the community of Phillipsburg, NJ. Our goal is to provide information, guidance and support when we become aware of anything that may be detrimental to the community.

Residents Speak Out Against Making Center Street a Bypass Route for Tractor Trailers

Rebecca Place Gets Some Answers



Rebecca Place spoke at the Phillipsburg Town Council December 6, 2022 meeting. Rebecca spoke about:

→ Trucks should not be allowed on Center Street. There is an intersection where the Phillipsburg Early Childhood Center children enter and exit. This intersection is right by Rebecca's home. There is an incline at this intersection which makes it difficult for trucks to stop.

→ Rebecca spoke about the sign with wording that provides a loophole for heavier trucks to be allowed. Rebecca's testimony played a significant role in having the town change the signs at Center and Warren Streets back to signs that are a bit closer to what the town code actually states.

→ Rebecca let Council know that citizens are not being kept informed by the town of what is going on. A lot seems to be happening behind the residents' backs, such as the changed signs and making Center Street the truck Route, which was endorsed by Council to the NJ DOT.

→ Rebecca Place presented the Council with a petition from residents of Center Street who do not want Center Street to be a tractor trailer bypass Route. As of December 6, 2022, there were 30 signatures, primarily residents of Center Street.

→ Rebecca let the Council know there are many school children from many schools close to Center Street, and some schools a further distance away, who use Center Street to walk to these schools. Trucks will make their walk very dangerous.

→ In response to Rebecca Place's comments, Council President Wyant had Town Engineer Tim O'Brien respond to her comments. Town Engineer Tim O'Brien's response is covered in a separate article.

Sandra Morrisette Wants Answers



Sandra Morrisette spoke at the Phillipsburg Town Council December 6, 2022 meeting. Sandra spoke about:

→ Sandra reminded listeners that in order to change weight limit signs it takes two readings of an ordinance, and weight limit sign change done at the Warren Street end of Center Street was done illegally.

→ Sandra let Council know that she wanted to know who authorized the change in signs and why it was authorized

→ Sandra commended Council President Harry Wyant for recusing himself from the vote on Ordinance 2022-30, also known as the warehouse ordinance.

→ Sandra said "shame on the Council member who did not recuse himself from the vote on the warehouse ordinance. This Council member has parents who live less than 200 feet from property on the application."

For More Information on the Save Center Street in Phillipsburg Campaign, please visit the website:

<http://savecenterstreet.org>

Status Of Center Street Truck Route Bypass Issue

First, the good news

On December 6, 2022, Council President Harry Wyant assured members of the public that no Council members want Center Street to be a truck bypass Route. Council Members Lee Clark and Keith Kennedy both said they did not want to make Center Street a truck bypass Route and open Center Street up to tractor trailers. Councilmen Randy Piazza Jr. and Councilman Marino had no verbal response residents' request to not have Center Street as a truck bypass Route.

The devil is in the details

The Town of Phillipsburg passed a resolution, Resolution 2022-51, specifically requesting the NJ Department of Transportation (DOT) to consider other Routes for trucks in Phillipsburg. The primary purpose of this resolution was to keep trucks off South Main Street, between McKeen Street and Union Square. On February 15, 2022, all five members of Council voted for Resolution 2022-51.

Resolution 2022-51 indicates that Town Council's **preferred route** for trucks in Phillipsburg is as follows:

- No trucks on South Main Street between McKeen Street and Union Square
- The town would not be required to provide a connection between Route 22 (Memorial Parkway) and Route 122 (South Main Street). This preferred Route would require trucks approaching Phillipsburg on Route 122 to essentially make a U turn by turning into Howard Street and doubling back on Route 122, then exiting back onto Route 22 at the Route 22/Route122 interchange out near Route 78.

OR

If a truck drives down Roseberry Street toward Center Street, the truck would have to do a U turn on a yet-to-be-built roadway that would enable a U turn and return on Roseberry to Route 22.

Since, as per Town Engineer Tim O'Brien's comments, the NJ DOT wants connectivity between state roads, the situations described above with the U turns and no connectivity between the state roads really has no chance of being approved. The situation described above where a truck is blocked and has to do a U turn is defined as "an entrapment". NJ DOT dislikes entrapments. Hence, the Town Council's **preferred route** has no realistic chance of being approved.

The following additional text is in Resolution 2022-51, and I will add *my text* in parenthesis for explanation.

Whereas the Council understands NJ DOT may not provide relief as sought (Routes with entrapments) and should such relief not be provided the Council supports and authorizes consideration of an alternate Route per NJAC 16:27-4.3(b)7.i that includes the use of Center Street and portions of Roseberry Street to be included as part of the designated truck Route to provide required local Route connections between State Route 22 (Memorial Parkway) and State Route 122 (South Main Street)...

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The Bad News

If the NJ DOT approves Center Street as a designated truck Route, and if this Town Council or a future Town Council passes an ordinance that Center Street should be a designated truck Route, then Center Street will be a designated truck Route.

How Can This Be Stopped?

In order to prevent this current Town Council, or a future Town Council, from making Center Street a tractor trailer bypass route, and destroying neighborhoods and endangering children, Council members and/or representatives from NJ DOT need to be convinced to stop consideration of Center Street as a truck bypass Route. The NJ DOT must not return Center Street as a possible designated truck Route through Phillipsburg, NJ.

Action Items:

- More petition signatures, and continue sending petitions to Town Council and NJ DOT representatives.
- More residents coming to Town Council meetings and urging Town Council to write and pass a resolution to send a letter to the NJ DOT stating:

*Whereas the Council understands NJ DOT may not provide relief as sought (Routes with entrapments) and should such relief not be provided the Council **DOES NOT** support and authorize consideration of an alternate Route per NJAC 16:27-4.3(b)7.i that includes the use of Center Street and portions of Roseberry Street to be included as part of the designated truck Route to provide required local Route connections between State Route 22 (Memorial Parkway) and State Route 122 (South Main Street)...*

Other Issues for Center Street

Center Street residents have also expressed concerns that:

Even with the 4 ton weight limit signs, tractor trailers are driving on Center Street, especially in the early hours of the morning. The tractor trailers are waking residents up at night and shaking the houses.

Phillipsburg Police Chief Robert Stettner has requested that residents contact the Police Department when they see tractor trailers and provide the date and time of the occurrences.

Please contact Chief Stettner at 908-835-2002 or police@pburg.org

Become A Member

The Phillipsburg Environmental Watch (PEW) is a grassroots organization operates under the umbrella of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition.

The New Jersey Highlands Coalition provides PEW with organizational, operational, and financial support through grants. The New Jersey Highlands Coalition also oversees our finances.

Please consider making a donation and becoming a member of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition and PEW.



<https://njhighlandscoalition.org/individual-membership-join-renew-donate/>

Please mark "PEW" in the memo or comment section.