

January 13, 2025

Manager's Report

A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager



Projects/Initiatives

Revolution Wind Offshore Wind Farm



North Kingstown Police Department Upcoming traffic/speed zone report



- Nothing new to report.
- The **Offshore Wind Farm Project** construction continues successfully without any local issues and with significant community outreach by Revolution Wind.
- Our next bi-weekly meeting with them will take place this Thursday, January 16th.
- Questions/Concerns? Contact Revolution Wind at (401) 255-2207 or info@revolution-wind.com – we receive weekly reports on these matters.

- Chief Urban and the North Kingstown Police Department will present a **traffic/speed zone report** for the community, recommendations for implementation, at the next Town Council meeting on January 27th.
- I've met with Chief Urban and his team; the report being finalized is comprehensive and will include concrete recommendations by the Department.

Projects/Initiatives

FY 2024 Audit Finance Department



- The **Fiscal Year 2024 Audit** is expected to be finalized this week. Our hope and plan is to have the Auditors present it to you at the (next) Council meeting on January 27th.
 - As mentioned previously, this year's Audit includes continued good news, showing a growing surplus on the Town's balance sheet, a growing surplus on the school's financials, interest income being generated by our surplus which reduces our tax rate and other good news.
 - *My thanks are extended to our Finance Department and to the School's Finance Department on their efforts to provide financials early this year.*

Allen Harbor Dredging Project



- The **Allen Harbor Dredging Project** is complete.
 - *My thanks go out to Steve King of Quonset Development Corporation on our partnership on this important project for our Marina.*

Projects/Initiatives

Holiday Giving Program Senior Center



- The **Senior Center** conducted a very successful **Holiday Giving Program** this past holiday season. *Thank you to all who supported these efforts.*
- The program assisted 123 families with almost 300 children in total. These families received a total of \$12,848 in monetary donations in addition to 21 families being directly 'adopted' by community volunteers, in addition to multiple gifts being provided.
- The 123 participating families and 300 children is approximately a 20% increase from last year's Holiday Giving Program, showing an increasing level of need in our community.

Mandated Rhode Island Minimum Wage Increase



- I've made significant adjustments to the **Seasonal Employee Salary Tables** due to the state required January 1st increase to minimum wage.
- As I've reported in the past, this will have a significant impact on the cost to operate our golf course, seasonal laborers, Allen Harbor, and our Recreation Programs, including Summer Camps.
 - The financial impact of these adjustments will be more detailed and evident in our upcoming budget process.

Projects/Initiatives

Finance Department Recipient of 2 Additional National GFOA Awards



- *Congratulations to the Finance Department and those staff members assisting it, including Kate Glass in my office, in receiving two additional national awards from the Government Finance Officers Association for thorough and easy-to-read reporting.*
 - We received news in December 2024 of our **Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award for FY2023** and the **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the FY2025 Budget**.
 - These awards signify our commitment to the best practices of municipal financial management and our budget transparency for our community.

No Parking NKPD Request Granted



- The State has approved the North Kingstown Police Department's request to restrict parking on both sides of **Boston Neck Road from Beach Street to Fairway Drive**.
- They plan to install signage shortly.

Projects/Initiatives

Climate Resilience Report Coming Soon



Planning Department Post Road Winter Wonderland Seasonal Decorating Contest



- A group of residents attended the last Council meeting in December and requested an update on the Town's actions to address **climate threats facing our community** along with actions within our Comprehensive Plan.
- While I provided a list of climate resiliency accomplishments during a Manager's Report a few months ago, the Planning Department is working on a comprehensive update and report.
 - I expect to present it to you, and the public, during the Council Meeting on March 10th.

- The Planning Department experienced 70 businesses participating in the **2024 Post Road Winter Wonderland seasonal decorating competition** developed with goals to increase curb appeal of the heavily trafficked mixed residential and commercial corridor while encouraging interaction and friendly competition amongst Post Road businesses and business owners.
- The winners of this year's competition, as first announced at the Recreation Department's New Year's Day Plunge at the Town Beach, are:
 - Best Traditional Decorations: Mae's Place
 - Best Modern Decorations: Pagoda Inn
 - Best New Participant: The Lock Shop
 - Most Festive Plaza: North Kingstown Laundry Plaza (NK Laundry, Total Look Salon, Renew Island Spa and Rhody Slice)

Projects/Initiatives

Senior Tax Freeze Analysis Analysis in Progress



- At the last Council Meeting, Councilperson Beth Hill Ross asked if we could put together a **financial impact of a potential senior tax freeze**. This is something we are working on; it will take some time. I hope to have a detailed analysis for our upcoming budget sessions.
- Until then, we've run some preliminary numbers using just the 2025 assessed values for the 2,300 or so residents currently receiving our senior income or flat exemptions; the total value would be \$1,459,409.80.
 - **Based on our current tax rate and a 2% growth in the tax rate, that would be an annual loss of \$432,000 in tax revenue with compounded growth each year.**
- This significant loss in revenue would have to be covered by those not receiving the tax freeze and ineligible for tax exemptions that seniors receive -- families who are having more and more difficulties in affording home ownership due to the rising cost of real estate.
 - *Also note: if the rate gets lowered as a result of the statistical revaluation, which is anticipated, the loss in tax revenue would be even greater.*
 - *On behalf of the residents and families trying to make ends meet in difficult times, I would be very hesitant to implement a senior tax freeze, asking them to bear an additional tax burden. Seniors currently – and rightfully so – receive a generous exemption as it stands.*

Projects/Initiatives

Municipal Parking Lot Brown St. (Wickford) Project Update

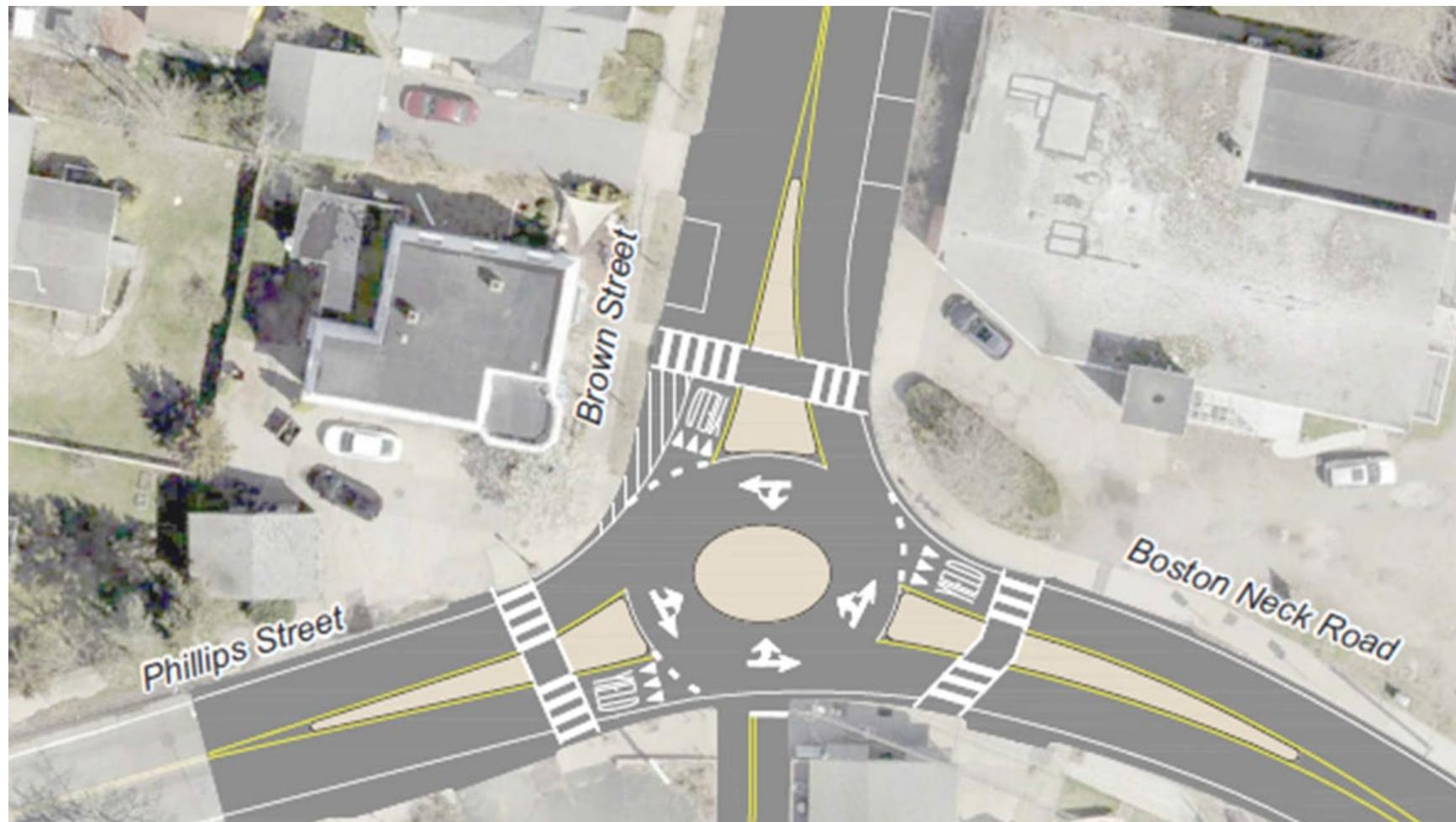


- The QR Code posted in the Municipal Parking Lot on Brown Street in Wickford has been repaired. I am hoping to add additional signage as well.
- For an update on the project: the concrete footing has been completed; the team is now working to construct the retaining wall. This must be completed before sidewalk improvements, drainage and surface parking lot improvements can begin.
 - As the wall was deemed historic by the Historic Preservation Commission, the new wall will be required to use existing stones. Any new stones will have to be identical in design and color. The wall is expected to be complete by the end of February.
 - When the wall is finished, the sheeting will be removed – in time for the spring season in Wickford Village.

Wickford Mini-Roundabout

Update

- I look forward to providing historical and current data regarding the Mini-Roundabout and clarifying some misinformation.
- I want to thank the Town Council for providing an additional opportunity for anyone to speak on this topic under Public Comment at today's meeting.
 - This solution was first fully vetted at public meetings back in 2020 and 2021, where residents, business owners, public safety personnel and RI DOT representatives unanimously supported this proposal as the safest solution to this challenging intersection.



Wickford Mini-Roundabout

History

- September 28, 2020, Town Council Meeting:
 - First Public Discussion of the Phillips/Brown/Boston Neck Rd. intersection.
 - RI DOT confirmed this was a very unique, somewhat dangerous, and unconventional intersection.
 - Substantial public comment followed, confirming concerns about the intersection with emphasis on both vehicular and passenger safety.
 - Public safety personnel from both Police and Fire commands emphasized that a 3-way stop sign and traffic signal would result in major back-ups in Wickford Village; neither would be advantageous.
- November 16, 2020, RI DOT follow-up:
 - The U.S. Federal Highway Administration will not permit the use of pedestrian control or flashing beacons for a stop or yield.
 - Based on input from public safety, residents, and businesses, two options were recommended: Islands to be installed at each of the roads leading to the intersection, or a mini-roundabout sized appropriately for trucks and fire apparatus and would “be an aesthetic gateway for the village of Wickford.”

Wickford Mini-Roundabout

History

- January 5, 2021
 - Subsequent meeting with State Traffic Commission, Chief Flanagan of NKPD, Chief Kettelle of NKFD, Planning Director Nicole Fontaine with myself and our Council President
 - Consensus from everyone in attendance was that the most beneficial option to improve safety at this intersection would be the mini-roundabout.
 - The mini-roundabout should not exceed 2-3" and should not have landscaping.
 - It will address pedestrian safety and would have a positive impact on traffic flow.
 - Universal consensus was that additional stop signs would be detrimental with the creation of public safety difficulties and increase traffic delays particularly on residential side streets.
- January 13, 2021
 - Unanimous endorsement of the mini-roundabout option received from the Wickford Advisory Committee.

Wickford Mini-Roundabout

History

- January 25, 2021



The public process continued 12 days later, with a RI DOT presentation at a Town Council Meeting.

Wickford Mini-Roundabout

History

- January 25, 2021 (continued)

Existing Conditions

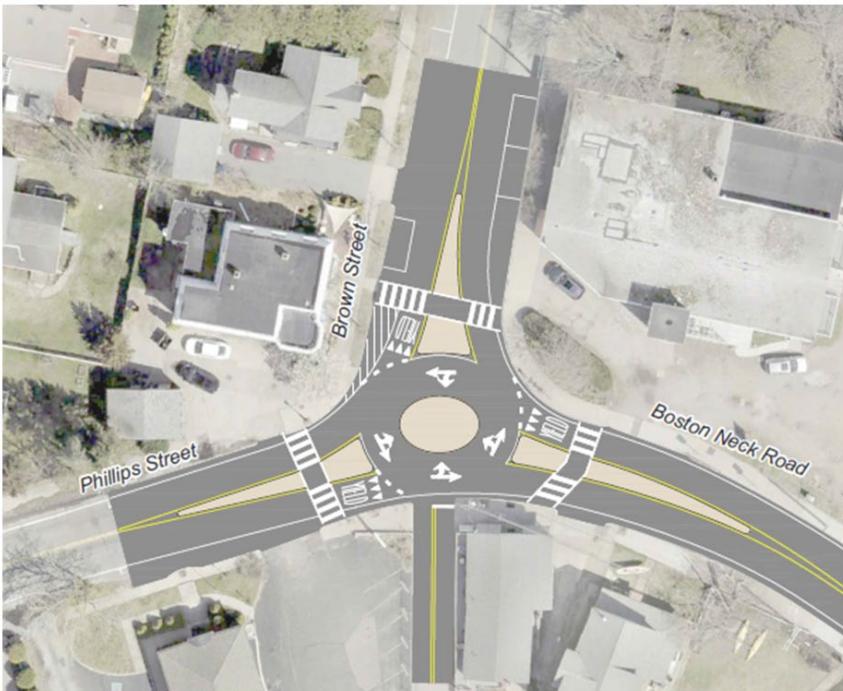


RI DOT took the opportunity to confirm that any additional stop or signal controls would add to the back-up in this area and would adversely affect the residential streets within Wickford.

Wickford Mini-Roundabout

History

Proposed Improvement



- January 25, 2021 (continued)

RI DOT proceeded to explain that based on the discussions, public safety, and traffic concerns, as well as the wishes of businesses and residents in the area, they felt a mini-roundabout that would fit into the right-of-way and would be traversable by large and emergency vehicles, would be the recommended option.

RI DOT stated that there are numerous benefits to this option, including that:

- each direction has similar control and the same yield control
- pedestrian crossing is much shorter by creating a 20' crossing area
- it would positive affect on slowing the speed of vehicles
- and it would have a positively contributed to the aesthetics of the village of Wickford.

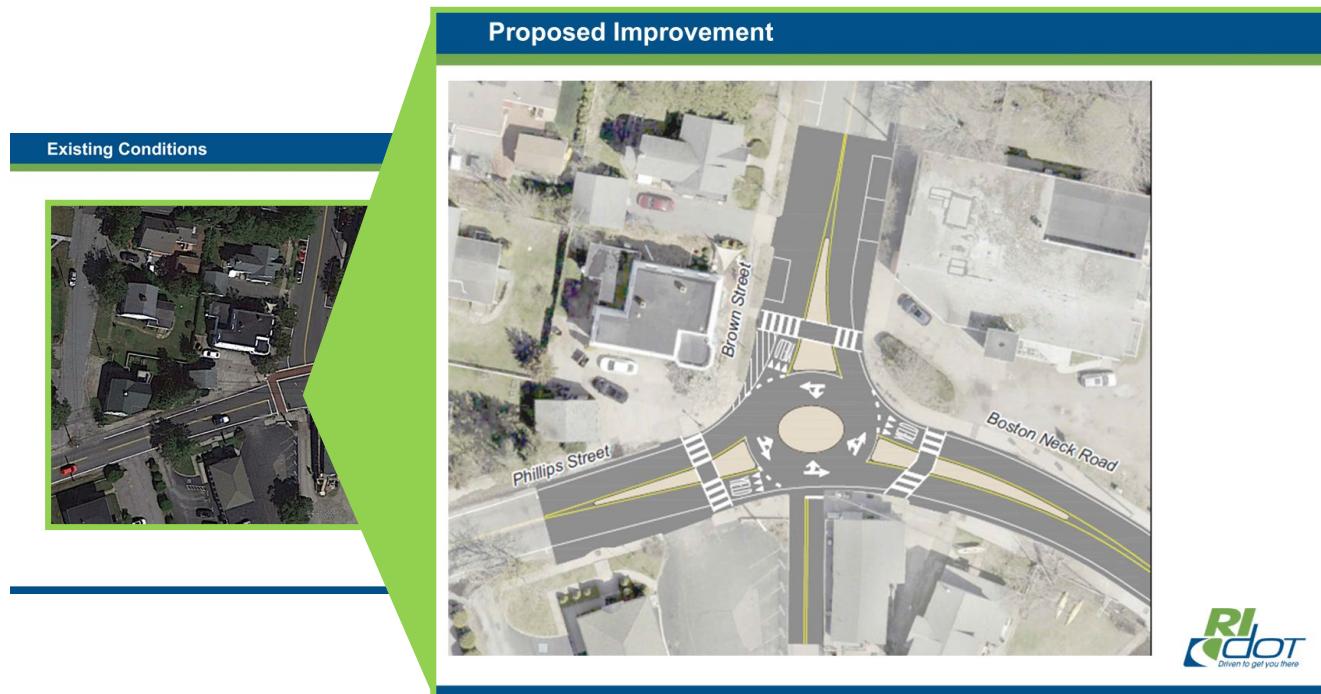
Numerous residents and business owners then commented that they were in favor of the mini-roundabout option and thanked RI DOT and the Town Council for their attention to this matter.

Wickford Mini-Roundabout

History

- January 25, 2021 (continued)

A bi-partisan Town Council unanimously voted to send a resolution endorsing the Mini-Roundabout as proposed by RI DOT.



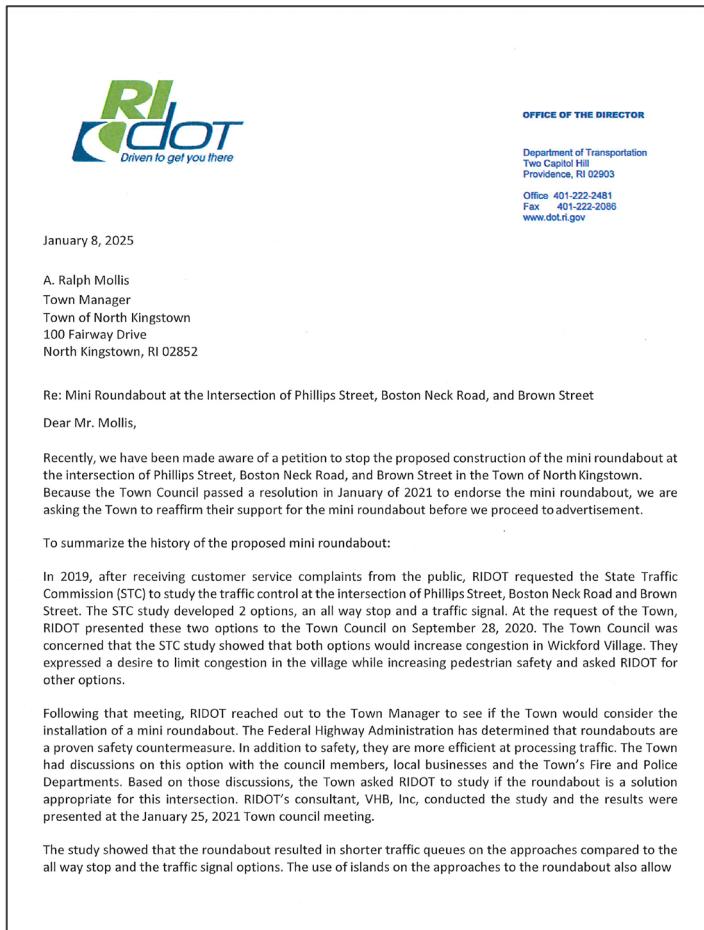
Wickford Mini-Roundabout

History

- Since January 25, 2021
 - RI DOT has put forth a significant amount of resources including \$209,000 in taxpayer dollars for the designing, engineering, consulting and schematic design for the construction bid planned for this spring.
 - Initial drawings call for a mini-roundabout within the existing paved area. No widening is expected to be required.
 - Large vehicles will be able to drive over the traversable center and splitter islands via a sloped granite 3" curb.
 - Splitter islands are proposed to be stamped and colored concrete.
 - The sidewalks will match existing proposed materials.
 - No additional lighting will be required.

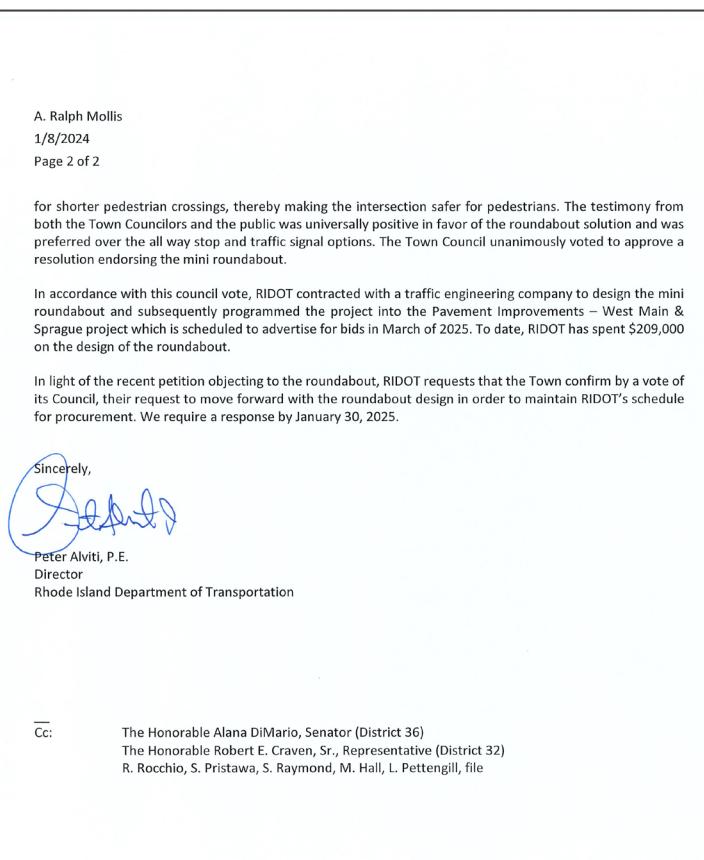
Wickford Mini-Roundabout

History



- January 8, 2025

- Letter received from RI DOT Director Alviti



- All previous options proposed could potentially increase congestion in Wickford Village, and a mini-roundabout is highly recommended.
- US Federal Highway Administration has determined that roundabouts are a proven safety countermeasure and are efficient in processing traffic.
- A RI DOT consultant provided a study that showed the mini-roundabout solution would result in shortened traffic queues on approaches and would allow for shorter pedestrian crossings, ultimately making it safer for pedestrians.
- Director Alviti asks for confirmation from the Town to move forward with the current plan.

Wickford Mini-Roundabout

From the Town Manager

- January 13, 2025 (today)
 - This solution has been fully vetted, receiving outstanding public input and has resulted in a solution that is supported by traffic engineers, public safety personnel, residents, and business owners.
 - State funds are very competitive.
 - While I can't speak for RI DOT, for the Town of North Kingstown to change its opinion after going through an exhaustive near-five year process to get to where we are today and over \$200,000 in state funds being spent on a unanimously supported solution to address vehicular and pedestrian safety in our community can jeopardize our future requests for state dollars as we look for their help resolving the existing Route 4 conditions and the many other projects we need their collaboration to accomplish.
 - After public comment, unless directed otherwise by Town Council, I will respond to Director Alviti's letter that this discussion has taken place and that no additional action is being taken to ask RI DOT to consider our plans for the improvement of the Brown/Phillips/Boston Neck Rd intersection.



Thank You

January 13, 2025

A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager