

Ruckus over Newville roundabouts

Natter rails against DOT decision

By Jeff Brown
Special to The Reporter

If it's true the squeaky wheel gets the grease, Ole Natter is in for an oily summer.

Natter used to own the Red Apple Restaurant on East Richardson Springs Road, west of State Highway 59. He sold the restaurant to Culver's but continues to own the land around the Culver's restaurant.

One of Natter's sons, Dan, owns Blue Gilly's, a restaurant located just down the hill from Culver's on State Highway 59 across from the intersection with Mallwood Drive. His other son, Dave,

is a developer.

Highway hell

So it should come as no surprise that the Natters were not happy in 2013 when state Department of Transportation officials announced they had decided to build a concrete median down the middle of State Highway 59 as part of their plan to rebuild I-39/90.

The median would prevent motorists on Mallwood Drive from crossing the highway or turning left onto the highway, which bustles with big trucks, boat trailers and Harleys on summer weekends.

Instead, motorists on Mallwood Drive who wanted to reach Culver's, Blue Gilly's, the Anchor Inn or any other business located on the west side

of the highway would need to turn right and head north on the highway, then loop through two roundabouts before coming out into the highway's southbound lane, then head back the way they came.

A tortuous path? Perhaps. But DOT officials say it's a path necessary to ensure motorist safety. Ole Natter said it's a path that will deprive the businesses on the west side of the highway of customers.

Stoplight not median

Natter came to a Fulton Town Board after plans to build the median were announced and fulminated against the DOT decision. He was back before

See **ROUNDABOUTS**, page 3

ROUNDABOUTS

the board last Tuesday night, imploring supervisors to ask DOT to reconsider the decision to rebuild the median.

Natter, who said he had written a letter about the issue to Governor Scott Walker two weeks earlier, said the real problem with the intersection was cars stacked up "ten deep" at Culver's and at the stoplight by the McDonald's north of the intersection.

"They can't get on to 59," Natter said. "It is a dangerous thing. If you have a stoplight there, at least you can get into traffic in and out of both directions."

Dave Natter said some of the business owners worried about losing customers because of the median would be willing to pay to put in a stoplight.

"They're not warranted"

Derek Potter, DOT's design manager for the I-39/90 project, was also at last Tuesday's meeting. He said DOT regulations don't allow stoplights to be installed at the intersection.

"Signals there don't solve the problem—they're not warranted," Potter said.

Town Chairman Evan Sayre agreed that the median was a bad idea.

"That's the most crazy thing I ever saw in my life. Somebody sat behind a computer somewhere and thought that was a good idea."

But, he said, the town, along with the Town of Milton, had fought the good fight with DOT and lost.

"We ground this thing to death a year-and-a-half ago. We ground on it for six months."

"This is not a dead issue"

But Dave Natter said it wasn't too late to re-lobby the DOT on the stoplight issue, given that cuts to state transportation funding likely mean the I-39/90 project will be delayed.

"This is not a dead issue. We haven't put a shovel in the ground and we're maybe a year out on this project—it's going to get postponed."

"We're not going to solve it here tonight," Sayre said.

Supervisors and residents will get another chance to chew over the issue during next month's town board meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 11 at 6 p.m., when the issue will be part of the official agenda.

Continued from page 1

New police chief

In other business, the supervisors hired Kristen A. Devitt as the town's new police chief after meeting in closed session.

Ben Riemer, the current chief, also serves as a deputy with the Rock County Sheriff's Office and accepted a promotion there that won't leave him time to serve as the chief in Fulton (the chief is a part-time position).

According to Town Clerk Connie Zimmerman, Devitt, who lives in Stoughton, is the Law Enforcement Program Coordinator at Blackhawk Technical College. Devitt worked for the Madison Police Department from 2008 to 2015.

Zimmerman said Riemer will continue as chief for the next four to six weeks so he can train Devitt.