

# **Middle Island Access Control Committee Report**

## **June 30 2021**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Middle Island Access Control Committee (ACC) was established in February 2021 by the Board of Directors of the Middle Island Property Owners Association (MIPOA). The Committee was to research various options to control traffic specifically at the entry to Middle Island. It was given the task to revisit the benefits and disadvantages of the installation of an electronic gate to the Middle Island community. Elayne Bennett, who was elected to the Board of Directors in January, was appointed Chair of the ACC, by the Board of MIPOA. Karen Melchioni, President of the MIPOA Board requested that the ACC include research from residents who presently have experience with gated communities, in addition to individual interviews of public safety leadership, contractors, vendors, utility providers, and ferry tram drivers. Karen also asked that recent numbers of traffic accidents and vandalism be reviewed. The ACC was asked by Elayne Bennett to approach this project in a fair and objective manner and to put individual differences aside. The ACC report to the MIPOA Board was to be completed within 3-6 months. Elayne Bennett set the due date at June 30, 2021 so that the report could be reviewed by the ACC with the PRO-Gate and CON-Gate recommendations.

### **ACC MEMBERSHIP**

Residents were solicited in an email from Karen Melchioni to MIPOA to serve as members of the ACC committee. Ginny Hunt, Audrey Dyer, Nena Bruffey, Greg Braswell, and Doug Larson responded to the email. Karen asked Rex Cowdry to serve as advisor. He installed the surveillance system in 2017 at the entry to Middle Island, at the firehouse and at the marina. She also asked Rich Tarplin to address and procure new signage to replace the entry sign that was stolen in 2020.

Elayne Bennett asked Jane Johnson and Jeremy Spivey to join the ACC. Board member, John York, volunteered his wife, Sally as a member of the committee. The committee was composed of residents with a wide range of backgrounds, as well as different opinions, to ensure a balanced and fair approach. The Committee is made up of twelve members, and one advisor.

**Elayne Bennett**, Chair

*The below represents the original committee positions.*

**Katie Chatas** (Advisor) Invited by Elayne Bennett to address Conservancy issues.

**Ronnie Willis** (PRO-Gate)

**Jane Johnson** (PRO-Gate)

**\*Rich Tarplin** (PRO-Gate) Signage Advisor.

**Rex Cowdry** (PRO-Gate) Purchaser and installer of the 2017 camera system.

**Audrey Dyer** (CON-Gate)

**Nena Bruffey** (CON-Gate) Co-owner with John Bruffey of a gated community.

**Ginny Hunt** (CON-Gate)

**Sally York** (CON-Gate)

**Jeremy Spive** (CON-Gate) Personal experience with surveillance cameras.

**Doug Larson** (Neutral) Representative from a gated community

**Greg Braswell** (Neutral)

**Joe Snee** (Neutral)

**\*Rich Tarplin** Changed to neutral. Stated he is pro-gate/ his wife is con.

### **ACC SURVEY DATA**

In March 2021, a preliminary survey was used to gather baseline data from all ACC members. The Google Forms survey queried committee members on their position, PRO or CON, on a gate, camera installation in lieu of a gate, or whether they were willing to consider a compromise solution. One ACC member, Rex Cowdry, chose not to take the survey.

The compilation of survey data conducted by an independent source demonstrated that 5 members were not opposed to a gate, 3 were somewhat opposed, and 3 were very opposed. The selection of the words “not opposed” as compared to “in favor” was to allow Neutral members the ability to express their opinion. It is interesting that at least two of the Neutral members were **not opposed** to a gate.

12 members of the committee, including the Advisor, stated that they thought the ACC was “somewhat” to “very worthwhile”. In regard to willingness to compromise, 11 of the committee were “willing” or “somewhat willing” to do so.

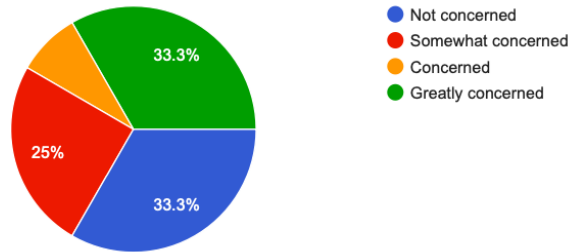
Survey results showed that the most important factor to the implementation of a gate would be its impact on public safety. **10** members ranked it as their **number 1 concern**.

Survey results showed that 8 of the committee members and 1 Advisor were “concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about how the BHI community would view the gate.

When asked about **camera surveillance in lieu of a gate** at this time, **12 respondents (11 committee members and 1 Advisor) said they “possibly” or “enthusiastically” support it.**

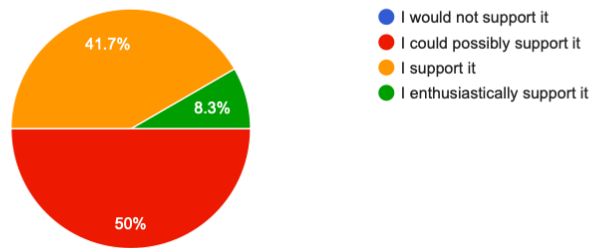
How concerned are you about how the community of Bald Head Island would view a gate at the entry of Middle Island?

12 responses



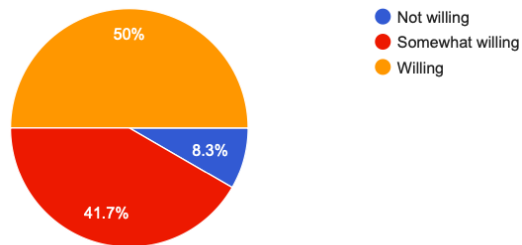
What is your preference for video surveillance in lieu of a gate at the entry of Middle Island?

12 responses



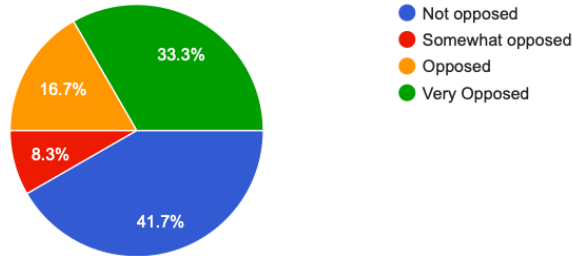
As a member, how willing are you to compromise in solutions to access control on Middle Island?

12 responses



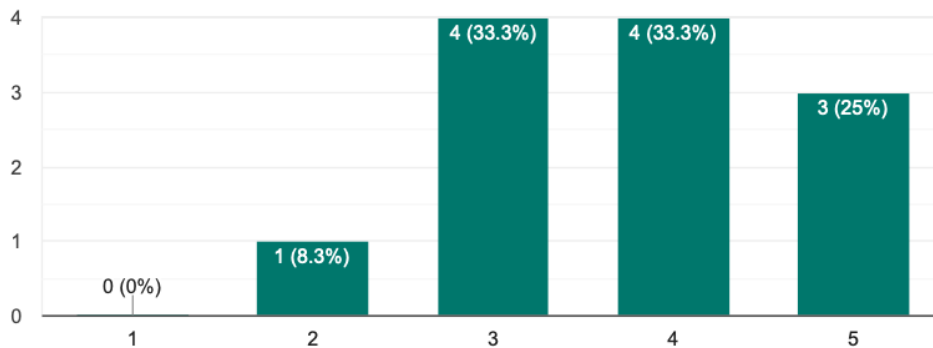
Please rate your feelings and/or your opinion regarding a gate at the entry of Middle Island.

12 responses



How worthwhile is the Access Control Committee in determining the necessity of a gate to the entry of Middle Island?

12 responses



Code: 1- Not worthwhile, 2- A little worthwhile, 3- Somewhat worthwhile, 4-Worthwhile, 5- Very worthwhile.

## SECURITY DATA

**Jane Johnson** interviewed **Captain Paul Swanson** in regard to his opinion of a gate and its effect on public safety officers. He reported to Jane that he thought it would have no effect and if there were an emergency they would simply crash through the gate. He did, however, state that if the gate were down and they were

on routine patrol with limited time, they would probably bypass coming to Middle Island.

Elayne Bennett, as the Board Member and ACC Chairperson, interviewed Captain Swanson, BHI police chief. Captain Swanson, provided data from their Public Security records, that demonstrates that there were **48 calls** concerning Middle Island in 2020.

In summary, **14 calls** were **fire alarms**, and **5 calls** were in regard to **trees down**, leaving a total of **29 other calls**. (which included 4 medical and 1 animal). The number of calls for **trespassing, incidents, property damage, house alarms, traffic stops, and disturbances totaled 18**. (Jeremy Spivey reported at the zoom meeting that all 6 of the trespassing calls were his, and were related to teenagers jumping the fence at the pool.) This equates overall to an average of **1.5 calls per month**. Obviously, there may be more calls during the summer season rather than the winter months, however, the public safety data was not provided on a monthly basis.

## SECURITY CAMERAS

The cameras currently installed at the entrance to MI are inoperable, and have been so for an extended period of time; approximately four years. The cameras were not utilized as an effective security measure. The data on these cameras was cumbersome to obtain and it is understood that it was never retrieved, reviewed or analyzed. In the last few years, internet camera technology has increased significantly, and the cost is more affordable and effective for various community security needs.

Elayne Bennett, on April 27, 2021, met with Gordon Naess of **Brady Integrated Security**. This company was recommended to her by **Jeremy Spivey**, ACC member. Two other companies failed to respond to her requests for a meeting either by phone or in-person. Gordon Naess traveled from Raleigh, at company expense, and spent four hours with ACC members, **Nena Bruffey and Rex Cowdry, and MIPOA board member, Elayne Bennett** to review the community's security needs. Brady Integrated Security holds the following licenses: NC Burglar Alarm, NC Low Voltage Electrical and Virginia Security.

The Brady Integrated Security proposal includes options—a two camera option (\$5200) with new pole strategically placed, and a two camera option, which utilizes the existing pole (\$4,800). These prices include cameras, weatherproof camera enclosures, 30 day data storage capacity, one year license for cloud VMS, and a 12 year warranty for equipment. If MIPOA would like Brady to project manage and coordinate with the other trades, there would be a project management fee. **A copy of the Brady proposal and his summary is attached.**

On May 3, 2021, The MIPOA Board voted--**seven in favor (Melchionni, Reyner, Alpert, Johnson, Bennett, Brown, York)** with one abstaining vote (Young), and one absent member who did not vote (Craig)--to approve the Brady proposal for **the purchase of two (2) camera option** in which Brady provided the pole.

Please note the May 5 email (attached) from ACC member, **Joe Snee** (neutral), in which he states he thinks the two-camera option on a pole, which would **“capture the comings and goings at our entrance is a good plan.”** He also stated a camera on David Ward’s maintenance building **“would be great.”**

**At the May 18 ACC zoom meeting,** the subcommittee agreed, by a raise of hands, **that cameras would be an acceptable remedy, and should be installed.**

All Members of the Access Control Committee except for one, who declined to vote, were in favor of cameras at the MI entranceway. Elayne presented to the Access Control Committee and let them know of the MIPOA vote for two cameras at the entry. John York was authorized to discuss some of the technical aspects, such as fiber optic connections to Spectrum internet service and coordinating access to information in the “cloud.” **On June 2nd, John York was asked to sign the Brady proposal by Karen Melchioni and Alan Reyner which he did on behalf of the Board of Directors.**

On June 6 the Board of Directors and ACC received an email from Rex Cowdry which expressed his major concerns on the cost of the Brady surveillance cameras. Please read the statement below from his email

“Incidentally, I gather there is some misinformation circulating about the cost of the four-camera DVR systems installed 5 years ago. They cost roughly \$900-1000 each, far less than the >\$5,000 cost of the new two-camera system – and today

the meaningful comparison is with the mass-market cloud-connected cameras that are even less costly than the DVR system.”

The entire email is attached. The last portion above reflects his costs for the camera system he installed in 2017. It is important to note that recent explanation states the cost was \$1,000.00 for 4 cameras. This does not include hardware (i.e. posts), licenses, wifi costs, or installation costs. Based on the Brady proposal a post is anywhere from \$400.00 to \$1,000.00.

Option 2, which was approved by the Board May 3, 2021, includes 2 cameras, a pole, pole mounting brackets, mount arms, pendant mounds, two licenses with free upgrades made to cloud VMS, and a 14x12x7 inch UL listed 120VAC weather-proof enclosure with solid state band controller, and one Trendnet 5-port Gigabit long-range POE plus switch, cable, and labor. These additional components that are vital to camera operation are **not** included in Rex Cowdry’s comparison costs. If the existing pole is used, the Brady proposal cost drops to at least \$4,800.00 and perhaps lower. Also, the two cameras in the Brady proposal which includes installation carries a **ten-year warranty versus the one-year warranty of the cameras installed in 2017.**

Another important statement in the email of Rex Cowdry “ The notion of real-time monitoring by Public Safety or others is a bit silly - apart from the question of whether they would occasionally watch the live feed, what would they be looking for?”

Public safety would have access to the feed, but they would **not** be conducting real time monitoring, which is indeed ludicrous. In the case of the accident at the entry June 30th, in which the driver left the scene, they could in fact **review the footage with the date and time and locate the golf cart and driver who would then be responsible for the costs of damage incurred.**

On June 6th, Elayne Bennett was instructed by Karen Melchioni and Alan Reyner to stop progress on the contract. It is currently awaiting Board permission to move forward or to terminate.



## TRAFFIC DATA

Traffic study data conducted by John York for MI traffic for 3 previous years, demonstrated that there was less traffic in 2020 than there was in 2017.

His conclusion based on analysis on traffic counter data is that there has been **no escalation in counter traffic from 2016 through 2020**. The busiest year on record for Middle Island was 2017. He also concluded to no one's surprise that Middle Island experienced more traffic in the summer months as compared to other times of the year. February had 3,000 hits whereas July had 16,000 hits. He also compared the rate of golf carts, bicycles, and trams during given months. He determined that for February in any given year we could speculate that of 2,500 hits this would correspond to 15 carts/bicycles a day and 5 trams a day. In contrast with July 16,000 hits corresponds to 89 carts/bicycles a day and 30 trams a day. **Note: Based on new information on axle count provided by Rex Cowdry, the above cart traffic count for July doubles. John York states on July 7th "Simply put: in Feb we had 57 visitors/day; in April, May and June we averaged 157 visitors/day and in July we averaged 290 visitors/day. This includes all vehicles: renters, service, constructions, trams, carts and bicycles. This is in direct contrast of the Gate advocacy report that "360-630 vehicles pass the entrance each day in summer."** When comparing the difference of activity between the entrance of Cape Creek counters and with a caveat that gravel may disrupt accuracy John York documented 50% less activity on average for Cape Creek than for the MI entrance to East Beach Drive.

John York's spreadsheet and recent summary email will be sent under a separate cover.

## ELECTRONIC SECURITY GATE VENDOR SURVEY

A number of contractors were surveyed by ACC members as to their views of a gate. Their feedback follows with the name of the interviewer:

**Nance Heating and Air ( Audrey Dyer)**

Had no issues with a gate, as long as they had access codes, but made the point that the when codes are repeatedly being changed, and if the code didn't work, they had to wait for the office to call the homeowner. If the homeowner didn't come within 30 minutes, the policy was to leave.

**Mansfield Gas (Audrey Dyer)**

Has no issues with a gate at entrance. Have worked in gated communities.

**Clegg Pest Control (Ronnie Willis)**

Unsure. Access code works better than an access card.

**BHI Landscaping (Nena Bruffey)**

Rob Prescott said "This is already a private island, why do we need a gate? The ferry serves as a gate. If you have a gate, you need a person stationed at the gate."

**Urban Coastal Electric (Ronnie Willis)**

Bob Mace said that he "would work with a gate, but wasn't sure how it would affect (his) workers".

**Always Ready Golf Carts (Doug Larsen)**

The concern of the person at "Cart Care" was that a gate would be difficult in the event they were required to tow a cart- likely that the gate would open for the first cart and potentially close on the one being towed, plus the "hassle" of getting a key or a code, to respond to the business call in the first place.

**Project Works (Doug Larsen)**

The Project Works person told me he thought the gate was going to be a "major inconvenience" and that it would just add another layer of wasted time "it already takes so long to get workers to the island, stage them in the contractor yard, send them to a job site, and get them started, a gate would be just another obstacle".

**Cortes Construction (Nena Bruffey)**

"A gate will cause delays and confusion and will cost me money and that will cost my customers. Traffic will be backed up, particularly in the summer. I have many people working with me, moving around the island from job to job, and we would need many access cards."

### **Tram Service (Nena Bruffey)**

Josh White: “ Pick up time would have to be expanded to ensure adequate time to get people to and from the Ferry dock; probably one hour or more to allow for the gate”.

### **Personalized Professional Services (Jason Ehasz reported to Elayne Bennett)**

He said he was neutral. However, he thought a gate only really worked well, when it was a staffed station.

### **Brunswick Plumbing (Nena Bruffey)**

Chuck Wyndham “A gate at the entrance of MI will be another layer of aggravation involved in working on BHI. You already have cameras, why do you need a gate? A gate will cause delays, and the homeowners will pay for the delays. If you get a gate, you need to have someone stationed at that gate.”

### **BHI Police (Jane Johnson)**

Captain Swanson: “We would work with a gate, but if the gate were down and there were other calls and they were busy, we would probably bypass patrolling Middle Island”.

### **Bald Head Island Club (Audrey Dyer)**

Reported that their gate malfunctions 1-2 times per week. The greatest problem is people trying to tag through with the cart ahead of them without using their code.

### **BHI Conservancy (Katie Chatis)**

Turtle trots occur weekly June-September and on holidays. Staff conducts weekly birding, middle island exploration and island nature tours averaging about 8 programs in a typical week. Staff and guests are in separate carts and would all need access to the code.

### **Trinity Builders (Audrey Dyer)**

Dale of Trinity said that “ having a gate would be a nightmare for his company. It’s going to create all sorts of problems with accomplishing work projects.” He has

crews moving over all the island on a daily basis. It will require too many people knowing the code, and when the code changes, it will be unmanageable. He thought there would be a temptation to vandalize the gate. "Vandals will vandalize. They are not going to stop at a gate."

## **PROS AND CONS**

**Pro-gate report by Rex Cowdry, Ronnie Willis and Jane Johnson submitted under separate cover to MIPOA Board July 9th by Elayne Bennett.**

### **CON-Gate opinions**

**Audrey Dyer and Nena Bruffey**

A gated community would indicate division within the BHI community. It indicates exclusivity from other island communities. It will create division amongst the other BHI communities. It would be inconsistent with the basic philosophy of the island, which represents itself as a natural ecosystem that is available to all owners and visitors to explore. People who moved into the MI (ungated) community were never informed and never planned to join a gated community.

The cost of installation of the gate would range from \$20,000 to \$25,000. Please see recent proposal from Custom Door and Gate, submitted by Rex Cowdry, which states a \$16,000.00 fee with an add-on of \$4,750.00 for an awid 300LR reader and 50 windshield stickers. Note the qualifier, "We have been notified by several vendors of a steel price increase coming due to the federal government's tariffs. While all vendors have not given us a notice as of today, we expect a price increase before this job is ordered." Another qualifier in this proposal was that the concrete on the road had to be a certain thickness. MI roads are asphalt and were paved over 10 years ago. It is doubtful the entry road would meet that specification.

Another gate proposal submitted by Greg Braswell from 70-West Access Controls, has a cost of \$25,641.00. This proposal includes a long-range reader, 200 sticker credentials, and has a 1-year installation warranty.

These proposals demonstrate that the cost to install, repair, and manage an entry gate would be significant. There would be an additional cost factor for someone to

be assigned for day-to-day management and maintenance of the gate—who to call, and who could respond immediately (e.g. within minutes), when the gate will not open or break. The Bald Head Island Club reported that their gate has a malfunction 1-2 times per week.

A gate may reduce the number of people entering the community, it will create complications and burdens on a day-to-day basis. A MI property owner, Nena Bruffey and ACC member, has a great deal of experience with a gated community. She asked the questions, **“What happens when someone can not get through the gate and who do you call when the gate will not open late at night?”** Nena reported that it will become a crisis very quickly.

While there have been several isolated incidents of vandalism in MI, there has been **no significant increase in incidents**, as reported by Captain Swanson, that have resulted in loss of property or costs to property owners. It does not seem that a gate with the significant costs it entails is warranted. **Some incidents listed were not viewed by police officers present at the level of severity reported by the Pro-Gate report and no charges were filed.** The theft of driftwood not on private property was never reported. And the singular incident of a golf cart crashing into the fire house was approximately 3 years ago. The young man confessed when **he was told the camera on the building captured his identity. The camera was not in operation and the confession would not be admissible in court.**

Even if access codes would be provided, it will certainly slow the entering and leaving of MI. This will create unnecessary traffic jams and slow access to the community for owners, tram drivers, service providers, contractors, visitors and renters to get access to MI. There is a probability that bottlenecks and traffic backups, especially in the summer months, will occur.

Those homes in close proximity to the gate will be adversely affected by gate issues. Homes near the entrance will be exposed to a continual series of lights and the sound of voices, while people search for their access cards, and will possibly hear their frustration when they can not get through the gate. There is strong possibility that a gate would impede access to and from owner property on East Beach Drive, Cape Creek Road, and Dogwood Ridge.

There is historical data from 2016 provided by Rex Cowdry that indicated interest in a gate, the decision was made to wait five years and revisit the issue. The 2016 documented information was generally biased towards a gate, without data and analysis. Only a few opposing concerns included. The information from the 2016 files provide some historical information, but it is not relevant for the basis of decision-making regarding a gate in 2021. There are 9 families on East Beach Drive who have stated their opposition to a gate. The three new families who are not in residence yet because they are in the process of building, have not been polled. Only four families currently in-residence have stated that they are in favor of a gate and one of those families is now neutral and is in the process of selling their residence.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Middle Island entry needs a reliable camera surveillance security system to address traffic and security issues. This vital acquisition should be contracted through a certified security surveillance company which has a proven track record, and will provide references. It is very important to have a company which will coordinate installation, repairs and ongoing maintenance, and which will be held accountable. This task is too onerous and time consuming to be left to a resident. The outside contractor should provide the Middle Island Board with a defined project plan, timetables and deliverables, to which the Board of Directors can hold accountable.

**The recommendation for a reliable camera surveillance system at the MI entry is a good one and should be pursued.**

At the last zoom meeting the ACC members agreed that a security camera system would be an acceptable solution and the inoperable cameras at the entry should be replaced. A camera system installed by a reputable vendor, will be of great assistance to public security in the event of intruders, vandalism, speeding, and accidents.

Overall, the vendor interviews indicated that an electronic gate makes it harder to provide services to Middle Island and transport their employees during the work day. It could reduce Middle Island homeowners' availability to obtain routine services and delay access to important or even life-saving services in an emergency.

Police Captain Swanson stated that a gate with the arm down will, during busy times, **reduce patrolling in MI.** That seems counter to the intention of increasing security to MI. This seems contrary to the fact that while MI would subsidize the cost of a gate, it may result in a reduction in police presence, which is paid for by property owners through Brunswick County and Bald Head Island taxes.

Currently an expenditure of approximately \$5000 to a reputable company for the installation of two quality cameras with a 10-year warranty at the gate entry, seems to be a **more fiscally responsible decision than the purchase of a \$20,000-\$25,000 gate system.**

In 2006, Arron Capel paid \$125,000 to pave East Beach Drive which did not include Club Circle Road, currently MIPOA has in its budget approximately \$130,000 + \$70,000 operating costs which total \$200,000. Best estimates 15 years later for paving both East Beach Drive and Club Circle Road are in the range of \$175,000 to \$200,000. **In view of this upcoming expenditure, it does not appear to be a sound decision to incur a financial outlay of approximately \$25,000 for a gate and its installation.** Other unknown costs to an entry gate are the possible increase in steel, the need to upgrade the concrete, yearly maintenance, repair and additional time to the property manager's workload.

Please note this addendum:

**Nena Bruffey stated two important points:**

1. As if Middle Island is a setting for a fictional James Patterson novel, the Pro-Gate report dramatically labels Middle Island a “magnet for mischief.” In stark contradiction to this inaccurate label, the report admits that **“So far, Middle Island has not seen as many problems as elsewhere.”** In other words, despite no gate, **the Pro-Gate report admits the majority of “mischief” occurring on Bald Head has not occurred on Middle Island.** This admission is supported by Bald Head Public Safety Department data collected by the ACC.
2. The Pro-Gate report also admits, **“So far, traffic on Middle Island, albeit high during many months of the year, has not yet increased substantially.” We agree.** Although the number of people on Bald Head (and likely on every other beach in America) increases during certain months of the year, the Pro-Gate report admits that, despite no gate, traffic on Middle Island

has **not** increased “substantially.” (Even this admission does not paint the full picture. Based upon John York’s Middle Island traffic analysis, we now know that there has been **no** traffic increase on Middle Island from 2017 through 2020.)

These two fundamental admissions **make the case against a Middle Island gate.** These admissions establish that no gate is needed on Middle Island. This gate controversy should end, the Board should vote against a gate, and the Access Control Committee should be deemed to have concluded its work on the issue of a gate. The issue of security cameras remains unresolved, but the Board should acknowledge that these Pro-Gate report admissions, (which are corroborated by the facts and data) have rendered the gate issue moot.

**The above recommendations were compiled and prepared by ACC members Audrey Kelly Dyer and Nena Bruffey.**