

February 4, 2025

Chairman Robert Craven
House Committee on Judiciary
Room 205
82 Smith Street
Providence, R.I. 02903

Dear Chairman Craven

My husband, Robert Salino and I reside in a private community in Little Compton, Rhode Island.

I would like to address how the proposed amendment to the statute creates an equitable distribution of the costs associated with roadways. We seek a statute that takes the vagueness out of the current process and replaces it with one objective method of arriving at an equitable distribution of the burden that accompanies ownership.

As the law presently stands, it is vague enough that any one of several means can be employed to arrive at an “answer” to the need for equity but none, in fact, produces results that are equitable.

For example, setting the amount to be borne by any one member based on the usage of the roads in question neglects the impact of a fluid owner population. In addition to full-time owners, there may be weekend owners and seasonal owners. Finally, accurately tracking their movement in and out of the community is impossible.

Another method might be to use the distance an owner must travel to find egress from the community and entrance upon return. In other words, how much of the roads does an owner regularly use based on their location from the community’s entrance. It is not fair to burden

an owner based on the proximity of their property to points of entrance and egress in communities with multiple access and egress points. And even in a community with one entrance, it is not fair to weekend and/or seasonal owners.

Finally, splitting the cost equally with all owners ignores the fact that there are differences in the value of their properties, the square footage that their residence might take of the roadways and that some owners may have real hardship in the “equal cost” method. Especially if their properties are of significantly lesser value given size or location than others.

After studying these methods, we find consideration of the real estate tax and using property valuation to be the only equitable basis for burdening owners with the cost of road maintenance. It is fair, accurate, familiar, easily implemented and understood which is why cities and towns rely on it as the fairest way to pay for public roads and services.

In our town, as in many others in Rhode Island, the town does not have the ability to bring more roads under its jurisdiction, so our roads, similar to many others in Rhode Island, are private. However, the burden of keeping the roads in good repair falls inequitably on homeowners with smaller lots and less valuable real estate. We believe that this is an unjust burden and if road repair costs are not assessed based on property value, it could cause undue financial hardship on some property owners.

We respectfully submit this letter for yours and the Judiciary Committees consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Salino, Sr and Eileen Storz-Salino
2 Butts Rock Road
Little Compton, R.I. 02837

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