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Lloyd Zbar has lived on Afterglow Way for 40 years, and the thought of changing the bucolic character of the area by paving its two yellow-bricked roads over with black asphalt — as one of his neighbors has been advocating — doesn't sit well. "It's a special place," Zbar said Monday at a meeting convened by 3rd Ward Councilman Sean Spiller to discuss the issue. "Certainly the overwhelming opinion is to keep it as is."

The majority, it appears, may get their way. "To me there doesn't need to be resurfacing," said Spiller during the 90-minute meeting at the Municipal Building. "That is what the data seems to show me." Spiller said he will recommend to his council colleagues that the two streets be removed from consideration for paving during the June council conference meeting. Mayor Robert Jackson and Councilman-At-Large Rich McMahon, who were at the meeting, agreed.



"I checked out the street on a rainy day and slammed on my brakes," McMahon said. "I was impressed."

Spiller, a former science teacher, took a scientific approach to draw his conclusion — he asked fire, police and engineering officials to present the facts, which show that it is not the surface of the roads that could create potential safety issues but their steep slope and narrowness.

"We did a review and analysis of the conditions of the roads and as you can see, from the engineering report, from the police report, the differences between the two surfaces wasn't a factor," said Township Manager Marc Dashield.

The facts, as presented, counter claims by [Roseland-based paver Thomas O'Beirne of Afterglow Way](#) that the bricks cause safety issues in the winter and are in need of paving.

According to multiple neighbors who have spoken to Baristanet, the [prospect of the brick roads being paved over](#) caused angst among the neighbors.

And yet the issue being raised has had an unexpected positive benefit. "One of the best things about Mr. O'Beirne's concerns is that it has gotten us out of our homes, and into each other's kitchens and living rooms to discuss this," said Carole Hobson, a 17 year resident of Afterglow Way. "It created a real sense of camaraderie."

She later told Baristanet: "But we're most pleased with our council representation. Sean took everyone seriously and his process was very thorough."

Crash data that Spiller requested shows that the cobbled streets were actually safer than comparable Montclair paved streets with a similar, steep incline. For example while Afterglow Way and Parkhurst Place combined (Parkhurst is the bottom half of Afterglow; the roadway is continuous) have had one accident in the last five years, Berkeley Place has had 12, according to the data that Spiller read aloud.

"Is it the slope? Is it the surface? We are making an apples to apple comparison to get a better understanding of the

data,” Spiller said.

Montclair Police Department Sgt. Stephanie Egnazzo, who leads the MPD’s Traffic Bureau, said that from 2009 to 2013, “What we found is that the crash data does not say there is a safety issue on that street and that area.”

Acting Montclair Fire Chief John Herrmann noted that to navigate the roads in winter weather, the department has rear chains to put on the trucks’ rear wheels “and we can get around town anywhere we can go,” he said. “From that standpoint we are capable of getting up the street.”

The planning board’s engineer, also consulted, noted that the curbs are in poor condition, manholes and areas of settlement in the road need to be repaired, whether or not the roads are resurfaced or not.

Spiller suggested that the monies earmarked for the paving over of Afterglow and Parkhurst, about \$30,000 he said, be used to make some of the needed repairs.

The engineer’s report also noted that the bricks need minimal maintenance, about once a century, while asphalt needs to be replaced every decade. Spiller noted that the brick option could actually be more cost effective in the long run.

“They said if you do the blacktop surfacing it’s cheaper than doing the manual labor repairs,” Spiller said. “However that has to be maintained every 10 years or so. They noted the bricks are at least 100 years old and need minimal maintenance.”

Officials also plan on installing a traffic light at the intersection of Bloomfield Avenue and Parkhurst Place, which will increase traffic safety, Spiller said.

Frank Godelewski, a local historian friend who spent a lot of time in an artist’s studio on Afterglow Way, was elated when Baristanet told him of Spiller’s recommendation. “Afterglow Way is one of those magical places that makes Montclair a place of rare and outstanding beauty,” wrote Godlewski in an email to Baristanet. “The brick road is the most emblematic built feature and it is unique and irreplaceable. I am so glad that Sean Spiller has understood the true conditions of the road surface and what’s in the hearts of Afterglow’s longtime residents.”