

Roxanne Maher

From: Roxanne Maher
Sent: Saturday, January 07, 2023 6:16 AM
To: Town Council Group; Fred Allyn, III
Cc: Roxanne Maher
Subject: FW: Ledyard's own Diamond in the Rough

Tracking:	Recipient	Read
	Town Council Group	
	Fred Allyn, III	
	Roxanne Maher	
	Andra Ingalls	Read: 1/9/2023 4:26 PM

Roxanne M. Maher



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the Ledyard Town Council
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council@ledyardct.org*

Town Hall Hours:
Monday – Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.
CLOSED FRIDAYS

From: J.D. Fontanella <j.d.fontanella@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 06, 2023 11:23 PM
To: Roxanne Maher <council@ledyardct.org>
Subject: Ledyard's own Diamond in the Rough

You don't often get email from j.d.fontanella@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Jonathan Fontanella, I am a lifelong resident of Old Mystic where my family home of 100 years stands just up the street from the Ledyard border. I'm writing to you today about Jim DeChesser -- Owner of 528 Colonel Ledyard highway -- to vouch for his integrity and his value to community, and to to ask for clemency in any issue the town may have with the maintenance of his property.

While it may not present to the casual observer, Jim is one of the most generous and knowledgeable people I have ever had the chance to meet. After my father's passing in April of last year, we were left with his extensive collection of

automobile parts and machine tools. Someone recommended that I call Jim, who I assumed would simply take it all away for scrap. Instead I was astounded as Jim came back again and again to teach me all about the history and functional value of my father's collection. In the end he took away only a few select pieces that he knew would be of benefit to other craftsmen and hobbyists, and he offered a generous exchange for them.

This relationship has fostered a new interest of mine in the restoration and application of machine tools from the vintage of New England's great manufacturing age. Jim has been instrumental in supplying me with compatible parts that may otherwise have been lost had they not traveled through time in his care. Jim not only possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of every manner of manufacturing through history, he also remembers the people; the laborers and engineers who made up a vital era of growth in our region that few seem to remember now. For this reason much of what he has brought me may be irreplaceable, but it is of little monetary value, making it all the more rare.

I have come to understand that Jim makes this kind of needful connection his moral duty. He has the knowledge and the tools to serve the community, and the drive to work at a pace I can scarcely believe at his advanced age. I have witnessed first hand that he spends long hours and great effort to manage his property at 528 Colonel Ledyard, but to be perfectly frank, in putting the needs of others before himself, his collection has overgrown.

If the state of Jim's property has become an issue with the town of Ledyard, then I myself must be held culpable, along with dozens if not hundreds of others who benefit from functioning work spaces, vehicles, tools, craft supplies, books, manuals - but for the thoughtfulness and hard work of Jim DeChesser.

It seems that Jim's only faults are that he knows too much, so that he can see the genuine value in all things manmade, (a value that he seeks to share); and that he has too big a heart, so that he assumes the burdens of others, leaving little time and space to take care of his own affairs, something that he has expressed as a priority every time I communicate with him. We must consider the situation thoroughly before we condemn him for the trappings of this invisible service that he provides for the greater good.

Respectfully --

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JDF

BLIGHT REPORT

528 Colonel Ledyard Highway

November 23, 2022

On May 11, 2022, a Request for Voluntary Cooperation was issued for this property, citing violations of both zoning regulations prohibiting unregistered vehicles and the Town's blight ordinance (#300-012), which also addresses unregistered or abandoned motor vehicles. The photos immediately below, taken May 10, 2022, demonstrate the problem.







In response to a complaint from 11/21/22, I performed a drive by inspection of the property at 529 Colonel Ledyard Highway. There remain a number of vehicles, including automobiles, boat trailers, and recreational vehicle/campers, many apparently unregistered or abandoned, on the property. The photos below were taken on November 23, 2022







The November 21, 2022 complaint alleged 8 to 10 vehicles (unregistered) at any one time, with vehicle, both cars and trucks, "coming and going." The complaint also alleges that it appears the property occupant is repairing vehicles. There is no business registered with the State of Connecticut for this address, and the Land Use files contain no information indicating such activity is permissible on this property, which is located in a residential zone.

Based on the previous inspection and Request for Voluntary Compliance, the most recent complaint, and the drive by inspection conducted today, I believe it appropriate to designate this property as blighted.

John Herring
Zoning Official
Blight Officer
Town of Ledyard