

Paper Street Project Report

Section 1. Introduction

In September of 1997 the Selectmen of the Town of Long Island filed a request for a 20 year extension to prevent the automatic vacation of Long Island's paper streets. Prior to September 29, 2017 the Selectmen must decide if the town should allow the town's paper streets to be automatically vacated on that date, request an additional 20 year extension to prevent their automatic vacation or find another solution to this problem.

A paper street is a street shown on a subdivision land plan that has been recorded at the Registry of Deeds and has never been accepted by the town as a public right of way, has not been constructed or regularly used by subdivision parcel owners as a private right of way to access their property or has not been formally vacated.

Paper streets are private rights of way for all subdivision parcel owners and the land under paper streets is not taxed. When a paper street is vacated the private right of way goes out of existence and the abutting parcel owners property boundaries move to the center of the vacated street.

There are a number of Long Island land plans that have been recorded at the Cumberland County Registry of Deed since 1888 that created paper streets at the time they were recorded. Many of these paper streets have gone out of existence by being constructed or improved and used either as public ways or private ways or by being formally vacated. Many others still exist and may provide the only legal access to parcels in a subdivision.

The purpose of this report is four fold:

1. Identify all the paper streets on Long Island that came into existence when their associated land plans were registered at the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds,
2. reconcile this list of paper streets with the streets identified in the 1997 Notice to Extend Deadline of Automatic Vacation of "Paper Streets",
3. indicate the current status of each of the paper streets listed in item 1 and finally,
4. recommend actions to be taken for each of these streets to avoid their automatic vacation on September 29, 2017.