

Planning Board Warner Town Hall
5 East Main Street
Warner NH 03278

September 3, 2025

RE: John Puc Subdivision Application, Abutter's Notice

From: Duane and Lori Souder, 132 Waterloo Street, Map 37-5, Abutter

Dear Planning Board;

We offer the following information, observations, thoughts and concerns.

New Hampshire is 9,350 square miles, 956 square miles is Merrimack county, Warner has 55.5 square miles, and Waterloo National Historic District has approximately 50 acres that includes of most of the Original Land Grant for mill lot #67 and consists of a grouping of houses and structures of the late 18th and 19th centuries which define the former village of residences with rural farmland/woodlands and importance to the town of Warner and industrial history.

Is this tiny but impactful legacy in Warner worth protecting?

Merrimack County has four (4) known historic districts; but nothing similar to the rural character of Waterloo National Historic District including a covered bridge.

Warner controls this very small, precious, tract of land including assets such as stretches of scenic rural land that has never been subdivided, rural historic houses including some that belonged to famous people in the past, a former railway station, a former tavern, and Waterloo Covered Bridge. Nehemiah G. Ordway (Governor of the Dakotas) and U.S. Senator William B. Chandler both purchased homes here as a base of operations far from the intensity of political life in Washington D.C.

The Waterloo Covered Bridge, (circa 1820) designed by Ithiel Town, is one of the few surviving lattice truss bridges in New Hampshire.

An important wildlife corridor runs along the Warner river (a protected waterway) and in the Waterloo National Historic District neighbors have seen deer, moose, bear, bobcat, turkey, fox, heron and pileated woodpecker among many others. Warner is interested in making parts of the abandoned railway corridor into a public rail trail for tourism.

Paul Kestner purchased this property (Map 37-6) in 1960 which is the largest piece (approx 9.34 acres) of the National Historic District of Waterloo. It is a historic house with a farm, very large barn, fields, woods, floodplain, and when he was offered the railway corridor behind his property and he purchased it and added to the property.

With the help of his family, Paul lived on the property until his death in 2017. When asked if he ever would subdivide his acreage, we were always told the same answer during our 27 years of being his neighbor across the road; he would never divide his land up, would not and could not and should not. Paul maintained the integrity of the area, protecting the river and wildlife, and he lived to see the area become the Waterloo National Historic District.

John Puc has lived in the National Historic District of Waterloo for five years. As much as we like our neighbor, it seems he views his property no different from any other; the same as any plot of land fronted a state highway. John Puc wants to subdivide his land into three parcels, splitting the Waterloo Street road frontage into three, the railway corridor into three, the wildlife corridor into three, the riverside into three, and the Warner River floodplain into three.

Map 37-6 approx 6.67 unimproved acreage, untouched for many decades, is in the very heart of Waterloo District, with the most footprint, largest visual areas from the roads or the water, the largest amount of railway corridor, and the most area of wildlife and vulnerable riverside. This is the acreage that John Puc proposes to subdivide for two new building lots for residences for now, but could end up in the future, businesses or multifamily residences or anything.

Anyone building on these two new parcels would require new drilled water wells, new septic systems (all in or near the floodplain), new modern dwellings, multiple years of construction, and trucks and heavy equipment traversing the "no thru trucking" on the small, old Waterloo Street, going over one or both bridges constantly.

More traffic of any kind can lead to complete destruction of the historic granite stone bridge over "Ager Brook" and completely change the character of Waterloo St. It will most likely result in taking large trees and moving large boulders and destroying a very active wildlife corridor that leads to the Warner River.

Further, subdividing this property splits the railway corridor located there from one owner into three owners. Railway corridors are most likely to be completed when they are in undeveloped, unimproved acreage. Owners with homes, small acreages, children, private river footage, security concerns, animals and pets are less likely to allow the public 24/7 to their private back yards.

How does this subdivision serve the heart of Waterloo Historic District, the neighbors nearby and the tiny road and bridges built for horse and carriages, the protected Warner River, the wildlife corridor, or Warner's town plan for the railway corridor to become public land and a tourist attraction?

In the past there have been many wonderful tourist attractions in Warner like museums and restaurants but most will pass away in the blink of an eye. None of us live forever, but we can during our lifetimes think of the gift we can give the future residents and visitors of Warner.

The Waterloo National Historic District, unless neglected and ignored by the Town of Warner, is a lasting gift from New Hampshire's past and all the owners and residents of all the times before. In respect to the Native Americans who lived here before, we are grateful to them also. As current residents of over 35 years, we can see that the legacy of this incredible gift to Warner should be thoughtfully preserved, heartfully cherished and given as it exists today to the future generations.

Respectively,

Duane Souder and Lori Souder
Residents of

132 Waterloo Street, Map 37-5, Abutter, for over 35 years
Warner, NH 03278

We are unable to attend September 8th meeting due to prior, unchangeable commitments.