MATTHEWS, N.C. - Channel 9 uncovered emails and text messages from Matthews Mayor Jim Taylor and town leaders that seem to target a constituent.

The woman behind the opposition to the proposed superstreet is the subject of some personal jabs.

Looking beyond the traffic on John Street in Matthews, Renee Garner works in her yard.
That property that has been in her family for decades, and when she learned she might lose some of the land to a superstreet widening project, she took a stand.

“This project is really personal for a lot of people. A lot of people thought their homes were going to be taken," Garner said.

Matthews mayor messages:

- Message #1
- Message #2
- Message #3
- Message #4
- Message #5
- Message #6
- Message #7
The Facebook group has grown to more than 600 members, and Garner has been in frequent contact with town leaders.

But at times, it's been a contentious issue, made perfectly clear after Channel 9 filed a public records request with the town asking for emails and text messages between town leaders about the project.

"I'm about to blow a fuse," Mayor Jim Taylor said in one text message to a commissioner about backlash over a superstreet meeting. "I'm not sure who's at blame."

Commissioner John Higdon emailed Matthews town leaders after a meeting on redesigning the superstreet.

"The aesthetics discussed last night amount to nothing more than lipstick on a pig. We need to discuss the pig (actual widening) that NCDOT seems intent on shoving down our throats," the email read.
Buried in the thousands of pages of records was a personal comment about Garner.

It turned out that the mayor was keeping an eye on her house.

Taylor sent a text message to a commissioner that read, "By the way, are you aware of which house she lives in? Appears to be a real 'tree hugger,' 'crunchy freely' type person. I drove by on Sunday, got an eye full."

"They're condescending. They are a personal attack," Garner said. "The tone of the email made it sound like he was searching out my property. My own personal property, I feel like, is off limits."

[RELATED: Matthews widening project puts homes, real estate deals in jeopardy]

Channel 9 anchor John Paul attempted to contact the mayor to find out why he would go to her property and make personal comments about a constituent.

Channel 9 repeatedly called, emailed and texted Taylor, but he didn't respond.

Channel 9 attempted to find Taylor at meetings where he was expected, but the mayor didn't show.

Channel 9 showed the text messages to a UNC Charlotte political science professor.

"It's creepy, frankly," Eric Heberlig said.

Heberlig said checking out Garner's house was crossing the line.

"When you have a complaint against government or talking to public officials, you expect it to be taken seriously," he said. "It's their duty to respond to it. You don't expect them to come to your house and essentially check it out or
Garner said she was so hurt by what Channel 9 showed her in the records request that she took a break from fighting the project, and is dismayed that town leaders would resort to personal jabs against someone who was simply taking a stand.

"I wasn't looking for drama," Garner said. "I wasn't looking for any conflict with them. As a grown woman, you don't expect grown men in leadership to do this sort of thing."

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