

Rural & Scenic Roads Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
October 13, 2021 (Virtual)

1. Chair Tiffany Ahalt brought the meeting to order at approximately 4:41 p.m.

Welcome and Role Call:

Members Present: Tiffany Ahalt, Peter Pearre, Dave Ziedelis, Ron Burns, Susan Hanson, Sam Castleman, Howard Looney, Jeff Yocum, Barbara Wyatt

Members Absent: Darius Mark, Jim Bonneville, Tom Barse

Staff Present: Kimberly Golden Brandt, David Olney, Denis Superczynski, John Dimitriou, Amanda Whitmore, Jennifer Keefer

2. The Committee members reviewed the Minutes of the September 22, 2021 meeting. Mr. Castleman MOVED that the Committee APPROVE the September 22, 2021 minutes as written. Mr. Ziedelis SECONDED the motion. The MOTION passed 8-0-0
3. Ms. Keefer, Assistant County Attorney from the County Attorney's Office presented on the Open Meetings Act and the Public Information Act and why they are important to the committee. She noted that the committee was created by the County Executive and is subject to both Acts.

The Open Meetings Act was created to ensure that the public has the ability to observe the transaction of government business. Meetings must be conducted in public and the public must be given access when decisions are being made. The purpose of the Open Meetings Act is to foster trust and confidence in our government, to ensure accountability, and to promote public participation. The Act balances its purpose with certain legitimate privacy issues that may arise from time to time and establishes very specific and limited instances where it is permissible to close a meeting to the public.

The Public Information Act, which is referred to as the PIA, balances the public's right to access governmental records with other laws and policies that may require the privacy or confidentiality of certain information. Written materials like letters, emails, and memos may be subject to a PIA request, along with other documents like photographs, films, recordings, tapes, maps, drawings, and computerized or electronic records.

4. Mr. Superczynski started the Group Exercise discussion of Key Challenges & Opportunities for rural roads. The first question was:

1. What is the biggest challenge facing our rural and scenic roads?

- ❖ Mr. Burns – I think the biggest challenge is how to balance the needs of the road user for safe and efficient travel with the needs and desires of the adjacent landowners.
- ❖ Mr. Castleman- I think the biggest challenge we're facing is protection from extinction. As the County expands, increased suburbanization gobbles up rural and scenic roads.
- ❖ Mr. Ziedelis – The biggest challenge is our roads are becoming non-rural and less scenic. We must balance development against these treasures that we want to keep pristine for generations to come so everyone can enjoy them.
- ❖ Mr. Olney – The challenge is how to design a program that has influence over preserving all of the features that you want to preserve that don't necessarily lie within public space, meaning the public right-of-way area.
- ❖ Ms. Wyatt – A challenge is going to be maintaining gravel roads. Those are the ones I feel we need to cherish, which is going to be a challenge since the public doesn't know about these roads. Signage that identifies them is needed. Ms. Wyatt also mentioned view shed erosion.
- ❖ Ms. Ahalt – Balance between the needs of property owners and members of the general public who are road users is needed. We don't have a lot control over illegal dumping and some other issues along these roads.
- ❖ Mr. Pearre – We need to address residents who question why gravel roads aren't paved. We have to address why there are small roads and non-paved roads.
- ❖ Ms. Hanson – The biggest challenge is maintenance and repairs. We need to be supervised by a division that values these special rural roads and is committed to preserving and enhancing them. We need to start coordinating and talking to other groups with the same values, and develop a stronger voice.
- ❖ Mr. Yocum – All the rural roads are usually remote. They are not heavily traveled, so they end up being dumpsites and places for illicit activity. Also off-road vehicle abuse needs to be addressed.
- ❖ Ms. Whitmore read Mr. Mark's email – The biggest challenges are development and destruction of the unique characteristics that rural roads possess.
- ❖ Ms. Wyatt – Are there width and length or even weight requirements on these roads? Mr. Olney responded that the only places where restrictions like these really come into play are bridges.

2. What is the most obvious opportunity for improving our relationship with our rural and scenic roads?

- ❖ Mr. Burns – We could translate some of those challenges into an opportunity with context-sensitive solutions. The Road Manual is being updated by DPW and possibly could include context-sensitive solutions and design guidelines.
- ❖ Mr. Castleman – A fresh start. A new beginning is exciting for many reasons. The need to better market the road designation, rural and scenic, as truly unique and special. The designation can provide residents living along these Byways a particular status for which

they can be proud. In 2002 all gravel roads were included in the rural roads program. Many residents wanted to opt out rather than seeing the asset value of their unimproved roads.

- ❖ Mr. Olney – This is the perfect opportunity for a rebrand effort. The signage idea and, in general, promotion programs would build the possibility of helping to sell the idea that rural roads are special and should be valued as such.
  - ❖ Ms. Wyatt – We need to cultivate appreciation for these roads among the general public and also maintain them. We need to attract people that may not go to historic sites on their vacations and outings.
  - ❖ Ms. Ahalt – The number of heritage travelers that come to Maryland is tremendous. The Maryland State Office of Tourism spends millions and millions of dollars promoting Scenic Byways to these visitors. We have a huge opportunity to ride the coattails of those efforts. It's economic development. We can benefit by making visitors more aware of these rural roads and how they tie into the Scenic Byways and how they connect the county.
  - ❖ Mr. Pearre – I am very protective of the road I live on. I think one of the big challenges is going to be having people who live on these roads, gravel or small roads, feel that they need to be protective of them. The people who live on these roads should feel they have a certain status.
  - ❖ Ms. Hanson – We need to change our supervisory body from DPW to Planning. In Planning we have Livable Frederick and other advocacy forces at play which is the same as other municipalities. We need guidelines for maintenance specific to these little special roads. We should with others, like cyclists and painters who love to come out here and paint.
  - ❖ Mr. Yokum – To preserve these roads you've got to make a change. Thirty years ago there was a lot of talk of replacing covered bridges, which is the very same argument we hear now. We need to make the case why we need to make the expenditure on these small roads we want to preserve. There are lots of assets floating around out there that we can utilize.
  - ❖ Mr. Looney – I see a big opportunity for synergy between these roads and parks. This is a real opportunity to use historic road designation. Tourists like to go to historic sites and a lot of them are going to use these scenic rural and historic roads to get to them.
3. What is the one BIG IDEA you want to share about our rural and scenic roads program that you haven't yet shared with the group?
- ❖ Mr. Castleman – We want to do all that we can to make this new rural and scenic roads designation popular with residents, knowing that not everyone will be in favor. It will entail a major public relations campaign based upon sound historic, cultural, environmental, scenic, recreational, and quality of life findings. Basically the tourism we've all been talking about. Our charge is to establish criteria for roads that meet certain characteristics, making them eligible for the rural and scenic road designation. The roads on the list should be ranked. We should look to see if there is an identifiable network of roads connecting to each other or other tourism locations in the county. The fun and hard part will be going to residents on these roads and sharing what we know.

This buy-in of the process is critical. How do we make these residents swell with pride?  
Distinctive signage – markers describing why the road is included.

- ❖ Mr. Olney – I'd love to see an Instagram handle or something like that of imagery and rural roads. I think it would be fun. When I think of rural roads, I think the visual experience and the views and what you see as you travel by.
- ❖ Ms. Wyatt – My concern is where these roads land. I think one of the most important things we should consider is a collaborative approach to their management. All sorts of different county agencies are sitting at the table and working on the management of these roads, including the Historic Preservation Commission. All of these county departments need to have buy-in and they all have a critical role. We should create a consortium of county departments that will be responsible for the management. The salvation of these rural roads is to get everyone on board with them. Everyone has a stake in them, and everyone has a role in helping to maintain them and make them attractive.
- ❖ Ms. Ahalt – I feel that public outreach is so important today, especially for our groups first year. We've been fortunate enough to be given this opportunity to really take a look at this program and make changes. So many times you hear people complain that they didn't really feel that groups did a good job with public outreach and advocacy. I think being unique on how we do public outreach, whether it be in other groups, events or speaking in front of rotary clubs, is important. Also making sure we're bringing younger generations into it. We have to get the younger generations involved. It will give us more voice and awareness, because we want to make sure that our efforts continue.
- ❖ Mr. Pearre – I'm going back to the guy who wants to live on a 21<sup>st</sup> century road and finds himself in a program geared towards tourism and history. I'm wondering if there is some way the County can give back to them. We need to make this appealing to those that don't buy into the tourism and the history aspect. Maybe there is some way to decrease property taxes and give back to the people living on the road.
- ❖ Ms. Hanson – Instagram – Frederick County Rural Roads has one that has scenery of rural roads. Collaborating and combining is going to make the difference. There is a possibility of interactive functions where you can point out bike routes, historic sites, and there is a way to find it easily with just the push of your finger. That would be incredibly helpful as an aid to people finding these roads. I think of our former commissioner who was fast to point out that people move to these little substantial roads and the first thing they do is start complaining about the road.
- ❖ Mr. Yokum – My big idea goes back to teaming with other entities that have other interests but they overlap with the interest of this group so that we can leverage off of that. At Frederick Community College I'd love to see a course on Frederick County, the sites, from the industrial, from the early industrial age, the mills. A history course of this type that gets people out and seeing what's out there. Our county is so rich that sometimes the residents don't realize what is out there.
- ❖ Mr. Looney – I think that we, as a committee should meet together in person as soon as possible and as often as possible including in two weeks because I think we will work better and more effectively if we meet in person.

- ❖ Ms. Whitmore read Mr. Mark's e-mail – For question number 2 for opportunities, he identified creating a protective program that ensures preservation. For his big idea, question number 3, he stated that the criteria used to select/add a road to the program should be specific to that road and cite elements to preserve through maintenance and from nearby development.

Mr. Superczynski noted sensitive design and roadway links, and thinking through what the criteria might be for each since we have a broad variety of resources in the county.

Mr. Olney noted that one of the things that has been on his mind for years is that there are a lot of interesting things out in the countryside. He wonders how much longer they will be around. We had intensive agriculture a hundred years ago and we have all the outbuildings, barns, chicken coops, and corn cribs by the roads. Is there a grant or easement that can be utilized to keep buildings from being torn down. That's an example of how there may be ways to try to expand the footprint and make sure that rural and scenic characteristics are preserved.

Ms. Wyatt felt that David Olney gave a perfect description of the rural historic districts. The county doesn't have a very vigorous easement program especially when it comes to historic sites. The county has leaned on the Maryland Historical Trust for that. I would like for us to put in on our agenda to learn about easement acquisition.

Mr. Superczynski commented that there are potential opportunities to do a lot with some of these programs. We need to sit down and maybe just analyze which programs we can use and make sure not to undermine the fundamental program that it serves.

There are a lot of tools out there in the County that could be explored that would help us a lot.

Chairperson Ms. Ahalt reminded everyone that if they have any additional thoughts to send them to Mr. Superczynski.

5. Rural Road Visits – Ms. Wyatt. Discussion about small group visits to rural roads and sharing observations and photos with the entire Committee during a meeting. Ms. Brandt offered to create a Doodle poll to assist with scheduling if Committee members are interested.
6. Chair Ahalt asked if anyone had anything to share before the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be October 27<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. Leslie Seville from Montgomery County will be presenting.
7. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:19 p.m.

Minutes transcribed by: Mary Dolan