

Rural & Scenic Roads Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
December 8, 2021 (Virtual)

**FINAL**

1. Chair Ms. Ahalt brought the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

Welcome and Roll Call

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

Members Absent: Jim Bonneville, Jeff Yocum (Note: Tom Barse has resigned due to other commitments)

Staff Present: Amanda Whitmore, David Olney, Kimberly Golden Brandt, Denis Superczynski

Guest Speakers: Elizabeth Shatto, Executive Director of Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area  
Tiffany Ahalt, Maryland and National Scenic Byways Program  
Susan Hanson, Friends of Rural Roads Rural Road Slideshow

2. The Committee members reviewed the minutes of the November 10, 2021 meeting. Sam Castleman MOVED that the Committee APPROVE the November 10, 2021 minutes as written with a correction to change the number of votes to approve to 9 as he wasn't present for the vote. Dave Ziedelis SECONDED the motion. The minutes were approved as presented with the correction. MOTION passed 9-0-0.

3. Ms. Shatto, Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA), presented to the committee.
  - Ms. Shatto stated that the program at heart is about tourism and immersion. The program is so small that it is staffed by Maryland Historical Trust. HCWHA currently has a strategic planning process underway. They also have current plans that address economic development, stewardship, storytelling and interpretation, and coordination.
  - Many of the region's small towns possess a high degree of historical integrity. They encourage community support for historic preservation and scenic conservation.
  - Of highest importance is attention to battlefield preservation.
  - The HCWHA webpage includes an interactive map which could be very useful to the Rural & Scenic Roads Advisory Committee.
  - HCWHA offers two types of grants – mini grants that they administer within their own organization and support non-capital projects, and larger project grants that go through the Heritage Areas.
  - The Heart of Maryland Conservation Alliance is a relatively new group embedded in the Catocin Land Trust and it is dedicated to Frederick and Washington County land preservation issues.

Ms. Shatto answered questions from the committee.

- Ms. Wyatt asked about the map that includes all of the troop movement roads. She expressed particular interest in Route 75, which has changed immensely since the Civil

War, and asked if there was any research on-going in that area. Elizabeth said that she didn't have a definitive answer.

- Mr. Pearre asked how far off the routes shown in Eastern Frederick and Carroll County are. Ms. Shatto responded that the default is 500 feet from the centerline.
- Mr. Superczynski asked if Ms. Shatto has seen a dilution in program funding because of an added area, the Patapsco Greenway Heritage Area. Ms. Shatto replied that they have seen an increase in the budget cap, and noted that the funds come from programs and are restricted, not general fund money. The cap is 6 million.
- Ms. Wyatt asked about HCWHA's highest priority - protecting battlefields. How are viewshed studies used in battlefield protection? Who are the recipients of grants? Ms. Shatto stated that the applicants can be all varieties of non-profit organizations. Ms. Shatto noted that they have not proactively included view shed studies, though doing so falls within the scope of what HCWHA is interested in.

4. Ms. Ahalt presented on the Maryland and National Scenic Byways Programs.

- Ms. Ahalt stated that our earliest roads originated from wildlife and Native American paths, particularly in western Maryland. When Americans started moving west, the good roads movement occurred – cyclists in the early 1900's were instrumental in advocating for improvements to our roads before automobiles. The first scenic roads didn't exist as the result of an organized effort. Many of the earliest scenic roadways were developed in pieces.
- It wasn't until the 1960's that a coordinated national program started to evolve. The National Scenic Byways Program is a part of the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. The program started in the early 80's and provided a tremendous amount of funding to create designations for roads. Roads received designations for their intrinsic qualities: archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. Many of our roadways in Maryland have some of these qualities or the majority of them. Eventually funding was removed for the scenic byways programs and a lot of organizations went away. Just recently designations have started to come back and there continues to be an effort at different levels to bring funding back.
- In Maryland we have three nationally designated Scenic Byways – the Historic National Road, the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway, and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway. We also have the Journey through Hallowed Ground in Frederick County and Washington County, Maryland.
- The Maryland Scenic Byways Program was a collaboration between the Maryland State Highway Administration and the Maryland State Office of Tourism. In the early 80's the state started to capitalize on promotion of tourism. The Maryland Office of Tourism has a great website that promotes byways and heritage areas.
- Frederick County has three byways – Historic National Road, C&O Canal Scenic Byway, and Catoctin Mountain Loop. Challenges and threats to scenic byways include signage, billboards, lack of cohesive efforts among jurisdictions, and funding. Middletown is a great example of preserving byways.

Ms. Ahalt answered questions from the committee.

- Ms. Wyatt noted that she finds the various programs confusing. She noted again that preservation organizations don't seem to be interested in view sheds. There are lots of

opportunities for working together and there is a need for cohesiveness. Ms. Ahalt stated that advocacy and working together are really important.

5. Ms. Hanson presented a Friends of Rural Roads slideshow.
  - Ms. Hanson noted that the Rural Roads Program was created by resolution in 2002 and was unanimously supported by the County Commissioners. Before that some roads were paved despite property owners' objections. The majority of gravel roads would have been paved if not for the initiative of the Commissioners.
  - The Rural Roads Program was created to:
    - Protect the scenic and historic qualities of the roads and the adjacent landscape.
    - Support, preserve, and enhance the agricultural/rural character of the county.
    - Contribute to a comprehensive, county-wide inventory of rural scenic qualities.
    - Ensure maintenance of gravel roads.
    - Discontinue paving of gravel roads.
  - Currently there are 57 roads in the program. Over the past 15 years the Friends of Rural Roads have sponsored many events on these roads. These roads function as multi-use linear parks for people experiencing Frederick County's natural beauty and history.
  - Rural roads create slower traffic when tarred and chipped. They are noisier when cars drive along them, which makes it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.
  - Poffenberger Road is one of Frederick County's longest gravel roads remaining and connects two structures on the National Register of Historic Places, the Iron Truss Bridge and the Lewis Mill. Gravel roads provided access between the many mills located along water. Three mills located along Abraham's Creek on Touchstone Road made the famous Chilcott Linsey Woolsey cloth. They shut down during the Civil War and all that remains are mill races and some foundations.
  - The covered bridges of Frederick County used to be considered unimproved inconveniences but are now regarded as highly valued gems.

Ms. Ahalt thanked Ms. Hanson.

- Ms. Wyatt asked Ms. Hanson about the 2002 resolution and her analysis on how well it has been followed. Ms. Hanson responded that rural roads are not limited to gravel roads; there are many more roads that need to be identified in a comprehensive road preservation list. The county is moving in a direction of properly evaluating the rural and scenic character of these roads.
6. Ms. Ahalt brought up the future meeting schedule and proposed adjusting the schedule a little so all staff supporting the Committee can participate. The proposal would be to meet on the fourth Wednesday of the month and keeping the time to 4:30 if that works for everyone. The date for the next meeting is January 26, 2022. We will assume it will be virtual unless we receive notification that we can meet in Winchester Hall. A subcommittee structure can be established for the Committee to make progress toward the report between meetings.
  7. Mr. Castleman questioned the date for our report to the County Executive. It is a year from when the committee was formed, which would be September 2022.
  8. The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Minutes transcribed by: Mary Dolan