

Rural & Scenic Roads Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 27, 2022 (Virtual)

FINAL

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

Welcome and Roll Call

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

Members Absent: Jim Bonneville

Staff Present: Amanda Whitmore, Kimberly Golden Brandt, Martha Berkheimer (Intern for Amanda Whitmore), Dave Olney, Denis Superczynski, Mary Dolan

2. The Committee members reviewed the minutes of the March 24, 2022 meeting. Sam Castleman MOVED that the Committee APPROVE the March 24, 2022 minutes as written. Peter Pearre SECONDED the motion. The minutes were approved as presented (10-0).
3. Julia Thavong, who administers the Kane County, Illinois Rustic Roads Program presented to the committee.
 - The program was existing when Julia inherited its management.
 - Kane County is 42 square miles, with a river that runs from the north end to the south end.
 - Kane County was the first county in the State to adopt a historic preservation program in 1988. Julia gave an overview of the types of buildings they designate historic. There is one historic district in the County.
 - In the 1990s, the County experienced a lot of development pressure, with farmers selling land for development. County planners and highway planners developed the Rustic Roads Program. The group reviewed programs in neighboring states. This program is partially Kane County's response to suburban sprawl. .
 - Designation Process consists of:
 - Step 1 – Citizen Nomination
 - Step 2 – Historic Preservation Commission Initial Review
 - Step 3 – Public Hearing
 - Step 4 – Historic Preservation Commission Recommendation
 - Step 5 – County Board Designation
 - Citizen Nomination – The owners present an inventory identifying features along the road they would like to see protected and preserved, such as historic homes, barns, viewsheds, and mature trees
 - The historic preservation commission conducts an initial review of the corridor management plan. Sometimes the corridor is only the right-of-way; some property owners allow designation of a larger area. Work done within the corridor management plan area requires approval of a certificate of appropriateness. This work may include removal of healthy trees, exterior alterations, construction of new structures/buildings, new road access points, driveways, fences, and changes to existing topography.

- Creation of Corridor Management Plan – The Plan is developed cooperatively by Township Highway staff and the Planning Department and Transportation Department staff.
- All of the Kane County departments, committees, and villages work together to review the nominations and approve them before they go to the Planning Commission for final approval.
- The first application for Rustic Road designation was submitted in March 2006.

Ms. Thavong thanked everyone and welcomed questions. She also gave everyone her email: thavongjulia@co.kane.il.us

Mr. Yocum had a question about incentives for the Rural Roads Program. Ms. Thavong noted that the landmark ordinance offers property owners who participate in the program a percentage reduced from their taxes based on the amount money put into their homes.

Mr. Ziedelis questioned if the program is used for tourism. Are the roads promoted? Ms. Thavong stated that it is one of the goals of the program, but she wasn't sure how much they were actually doing. Mr. Ziedelis asked if they promoted the roads via a website. Ms. Thavong stated that there will be a website eventually, but currently there is only a small brochure.

Ms. Wyatt asked if when the program was being established any thought was given to starting a different commission instead of using the HPC, such as a commission with specific road expertise. She also asked what adjustments they had to make to amend their guidelines specific to road maintenance and the department of public works gets involved with maintenance issues. She noticed that the road surfaces vary and asked to what extent road surface is considered. Ms. Thavong noted that the HPC was a part of creating the program, so they are the review body that takes care of and issues the certificates of appropriateness. The ordinance states that a rustic road can have any surface. In Kane County they have had paved roads for over a hundred years. They can also determine if a road needs to be paved. There are roadway supervisors (in each Township) that can determine if a gravel road no longer services the purpose appropriately. It is the supervisors that keep the roads updated according to the Corridor Management Plans. The HPC can not stop roads being paved. Most roadway supervisors keep the roads gravel because they are less expensive to maintain.

Mr. Pearre asked about the nomination process – is the approval of a majority of property owners along the road required to nominate. Ms. Thavong stated that a majority (51%) is required.

Mr. Castleman asked if someone who does not own property along the road can nominate it for the program. Ms. Thavong noted that was not allowed. The County can move forward for landmark status without owner agreement, but not for road nominations. All roads in the program are County roads. Mr. Castleman asked how many roads are in the program. Ms. Thavong responded that they only have 4 roads in the program.

4. Mr. Castleman presented the subcommittee report for Criteria and Nomination:
 - They took their initial map and had the biking group look at it and mark roads to be considered for inclusion. They divided the County into quadrants and have gone out and driven the roads marked for consideration. The process feels subjective even though they have outlined the criteria. They went back to the drawing board, driven by strong input from Mr. Olney who brings a cultural influence and is a biker. Mr. Olney suggested criteria that they could use to pare down the number of roads.

- The first criterion considered was road surface. The second was daily volume. They applied less than 1,000 daily trips. The third criterion was roads that are adjacent to protected properties.
 - He noted there may be times when the subjective criteria might trump the objective criteria. For example, Harphill Road has a speed limit of 40 mph and is a striped road, but is still a beautiful scenic road.
 - They are struggling with the fact that the program has to start with some roads. They need to identify some strong candidate roads and encourage residents to nominate them. Mr. Olney noted that they need to think about what being in the program means in practical terms, and suggested having a tiered approach with different levels of rustic roads. Different levels would have different policies.
5. Mr. Burns presented the subcommittee report for Program Policy Guidelines:
 - The subcommittee report is about 90% complete and close to being ready for review by the full committee.
 - The subcommittee has considered how the subdivision and site plan regulations might be amended to address land development adjacent to rustic roads.
 - The subcommittee is recommending that the County create a Rustic Road Commission to oversee implementation of the program.
 6. Mr. Ziedelis presented the subcommittee report for Education, Promotion, & Tourism:
 - The subcommittee report is 85- 90% complete at this point.
 - A lot of elements have been incorporated, including historic resources, parks, the Main Street program, and local trails connected to rural scenic roads.
 7. The next meeting is scheduled for May 25th at 4:30 pm. The committee will meet in person at Winchester Hall.
 8. Ms. Ahalt stated that she would like everyone to review all the subcommittee reports before our next meeting, and be ready to discuss them.
 9. The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.