

November 25, 2008

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Roads Board of Caroline County, Maryland convened at 7:00 p.m. on November 25, 2008 in the hearing room, Courthouse, Denton.

Attending: Jefferson L. Ghrist, Board Chairman
John W. Cole, Member
Roger Layton, Member
Richard P. Barton, County Administrator
Bryan K. North, Roads Superintendent

On motion by Mr. Roger Layton, the Roads Board minutes of the September 30, 2008 meeting were unanimously approved.

Mr. Bryan North reported the crews would be working on service requests, the limbing program, and scraping dirt roads as necessary. Within the past month, the snow equipment has been checked out, and is ready to be put into service if needed.

On November 17th, signs were posted on **Ninetown Road** officially closing the road to the public. The signs state “**Do Not Enter**” “**Road Closed, Private Property**”. Mr. North explained that usually a pile of dirt is placed at the end of the road obstructing people from traveling down the road, but Mr. Dean objected to it being placed there, as well as the property owner on the other end of **Stevenson Road**, since they wanted to be able to move farm equipment.

The Board discussed the replacement of **Poplar Neck Bridge**, stating that with the bridge out, the road leads to nowhere now. Also in the same area is **Back Landing Bridge** (Dorchester County’s responsibility) which is also closed.

Mr. Bryan North reported the cost to replace **Poplar Neck Bridge** with everything the same as it is now would be \$460,395. This would be the constructions costs, not the engineering. To replace **Poplar Neck Bridge** with a Glu-Laminated Bridge would cost \$545,895. About 1 ½ years in design time would be saved if the County doesn’t use Federal Aid Funds, and uses all County funds. Bryan gave an estimate of \$79,000 to do the design engineering phase of the bridge. The wetland issues and permitting process would still have to be done.

Mr. Harry Cole, Director, commented that Dorchester County is trying to use Federal Funds to do their projects. Because of the storm damage, they received an 80/20 match to replace the dam at **Galestown**, as well as some other projects. Caroline fulfilled their part in replacing **Blades Road Bridge**, now it is up to Dorchester County to replace **Back Landing Bridge**. We have the same obligation with Queen Anne's County in that we are to replace the bridge on **Mason Bridge Road**. The money for **Mason Bridge** and **Legion Road Bridge** are both reallocated Federal funds that other counties were not able to use.

Mr. Bryan North stated there is the possibility that we could use reallocated Federal Funds for **Poplar Neck Bridge**. He is going to try to use these funds for **Noble Bridge**, but he isn't that far along on the program to acquire the money yet. The County receives \$250,000 - \$275,000 each year to go towards construction.

Mr. John Cole suggested moving forward on this project in exploring the best sources of funding that is on a reasonable schedule.

Mr. Harry Cole stated the cost to do the engineering on the bridges is on the County. When Public Works submits their capital budget, the cost to do **Poplar Neck Bridge** would be included.

Mr. Bryan North distributed some pictures taken by Mr. James Van Hanson, of **Stevenson Road**. Mr. Van Hanson has been complaining about the condition of this road. Mr. North explained that Stevenson Road had been scraped thirteen times this year.

Mr. Van Hanson, of 22645 **Stevenson Road**, Ridgely, MD commented that **Stevenson Road** is heavily traveled, with 16 residents on this road. With **Ninetown Road** being closed, it creates more traffic on Stevenson Road. He stated that he has been living there 1 ½ years, and recently had to have a front end alignment done on his Yukon. He felt the road wasn't safe to travel on. Just recently, a vehicle came around the corner too fast for the condition of the road and slid into the ditch in front of his property.

Mr. Jeff Ghrist commented that the Board would meet to discuss the list of road improvements, and their priorities as far as capital projects.

Ms. Michelle Weesner, 22731 **Stevenson Road**, Ridgely, MD, commented that she recently incurred a large expense to repair her car, which she blamed on the dirt road. She stated that family won't visit her because of the condition of the road. The road gets slippery when it is wet. There has been an increase in traffic since closing Ninetown Road. She suggested the money that was saved from maintaining **Ninetown Road** should be used towards paving **Stevenson Road**. She was also concerned about a large hole where **Sparks Road, Dean Road, and Stevenson Road** meet.

Mr. Bryan North commented on the traffic count on **Stevenson Road**, stating that before 2008, the traffic count was 77 cars per day. The traffic count on **Sparks Road**, conducted in 2002 was 108 vehicles per day.

Mr. Berl Jester stated that 9 – 10 new homes have been constructed since 2004 on **Stevenson Road**. This would add at least an additional two cars per household using the road. He was concerned with the soft shoulder when meeting farm equipment on the road. He didn't see where putting extra dirt on the roadway helped. Putting tar and chip on the road would solve the problem.

Mr. John Cole commented that a work session is needed since the improvement list was created July 13, 1999. He suggested having a work session after the holidays to revisit and re-evaluate the priorities.

Mr. Harry Cole reported there are 78 miles of dirt roads in the county. From the original list, they have completed 14.91 miles, with 4.79 miles left to do.

On motion by Mr. John Cole, seconded by Mr. Roger Layton, the Roads Board agreed to meet as early as possible after the first of the year to re-evaluate the road paving priorities.

Mr. Richard Barton, County Administrator, inquired about the cost per mile for tar and chipping a road. Mr. Bryan North stated that it would cost \$250,000 to tar and chip a road on a 30' right of way. This includes engineering, surveying, and tar and chip. This would be for a private contractor doing the dirt work, and County personnel applying the tar and chip surface.

Mr. Jeff Ghrist commented that last year, County employees didn't receive raises, and the resurfacing program was scaled back. As far as the capital priorities, he felt that the paved roads should be maintained or they will have to be rebuilt. For long term planning, he suggested having data on traffic counts so when the funding is there, the Board knows which roads they are going to pave.

Mr. Jeff Ghrist talked about the economy noting that the Commissioners represent 33,000 people, and they don't want their taxes increased. An additional two million dollars is needed to renovate Colonel Richardson High School, and the Preston Elementary School needs a new roof. Two bridges need to be repaired, as well as maintaining the existing infrastructure. The Sheriff's Department and Emergency Services are understaffed. He stated this is a very serious concern, and takes priority over building new roads. He encouraged the public to come back, as the budget process begins in February.

There being no further County Roads Board business, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Diane F. Pippin
Executive Assistant