

September 30, 2008

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Roads Board of Caroline County, Maryland convened at 7:00 p.m. on September 30, 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  
Harry T. Cole, Roads Superintendent/Acting Director

On motion by Mr. John Cole, the Roads Board minutes of the August 26, 2008 meeting were unanimously approved.

Mr. Harry Cole reported the crews would be concentrating on mowing all the roadways, and cleaning up around the guardrails. When weather permits, gravel roads would be scraped.

Mr. Harry Cole informed the Roads Board about the upcoming Customer Appreciation Day at the Mid Shore I Landfill in Easton on Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>. If their schedules allow, they were welcome to attend.

At 7:05 p.m. the Roads Board started the public hearing on the possible closure of the dirt portion of **Ninetown Road**, from **Dean Road** to **Stevenson Road**. Mr. Harry Cole read what was advertised in the newspaper, stating that the Commissioners of Caroline County, sitting as the Roads Board, will hold a public hearing regarding a proposal to close the dirt section of **Ninetown Road**, from **Dean Road** to **Stevenson Road**, located in the 7<sup>th</sup> election district. The public will be given an opportunity to comment on the proposal whether or not to close said road at a public hearing to be held at the Caroline County Courthouse, 109 Market Street, Denton, Maryland on Tuesday September 30, 2008.

Mr. Jeff Ghrist, Roads Board Chairman, stated the public hearing was on the agenda because one property owner, owning land on both sides of the roadway, requested the County close the road. Another consideration was the cost savings potential to the County. He stated the Board hasn't made a decision either way, as they wanted to get input from the public.

Mr. Harry Cole stated the dirt section of **Ninetown Road** is 1.27 miles long. The cost to tar and chip the 1.27 mile section road on a 30 foot right of way would be over \$300,000. Even without paving the road, there would still be maintenance costs for scraping and adding dirt as conditions require. The last average daily traffic count on **Ninetown Road** was conducted in 2002, and showed an average of seventy vehicles per day.

**Mr. Charles Dean, III**, 23039 **Ninetown Road**, Ridgely, Maryland 21660 stated the Dean family sent a letter to the Commissioners requesting the closure of the dirt portion of **Ninetown Road**. The Dean family gave the county land for the road in 1910, and is essentially the only ones who live on it. He stated their property has been continual victims of vandalism, joy riding, and people dumping trash. Because essentially there is one owner for 90% of the road, they thought it would be logistically easy and cost effective to close the road. He said that in order to protect his family, their land, and livestock, it would be best to have the road closed to the public.

**Mr. Buck Morris**, 211 **Clarks Corner Road**, Centreville, MD 21617, opposes the road closure. He stated that his mother owns the other 10% of the land. Her property borders on both sides of Ninetown Road, plus **Stevenson Road** where it joins up with **Ninetown**. His concern was that to close the road, you would essentially cut off the shortest distance to the town of Ridgely. He also said that any time road frontage or access is taken from a property, the land value drops. He stated that "it's always been a county road there; I don't see any reason to close it now."

**Mr. Charles Dean, Jr.**, of 23039 **Ninetown Road**, Ridgely, Maryland 21660, addressed the Board stating that Mr. Morris has more road frontage on **Stevenson Road** than he does on **Ninetown Road**. Mr. Dean said there is more traffic on the road now than what the 2002 study showed, most of which starts at 11:00 p.m. and runs all night. People are still dumping trash on their property.

**Mr. Brad Dean**, of 23039 **Ninetown Road**, Ridgely, Maryland 21660, stated that he is the next generation on the farm, and being virtually the sole property owners, they are the only ones who have to deal with the problems. He has filed many police reports on people who are causing the problems in the area.

**Ms. Michelle Wessner**, resident on **Stevenson Road**, was concerned that closing the dirt portion of **Ninetown Road** would put more traffic on her road, which is also unpaved. The school bus won't drive down **Stevenson Road** to pick up the children. She asked the Board that if the County decided to close **Ninetown Road**, would they consider paving **Stevenson Road**.

Mr. Roger Layton commented that when he used to patrol that area, he always drove down **Stevenson Road** rather than **Ninetown Road** because it was always in better condition.

Mr. Jeff Ghrist stated that a list of roads for improvement was developed in 1999. Roads were prioritized by mainly the average daily traffic count; the list hasn't been revised since then. With the current economic situation, all dirt roads in the county will continue to be maintained as is, and no new paving projects will go forward until the county revenues turn around.

Mr. Jeff Ghrist stated that his priorities were public safety and education. He thought it was more important that police and emergency medical personnel respond as quickly as possible. If he were to choose between paving the road and making sure the police and emergency medical services were staffed, he would have to choose public safety.

At 7:25 p.m. the public hearing officially ended, and the Board resumed the Roads Board Meeting.

Mr. John Cole stated that he was involved in the initial study in 1999, and since then, the dynamics of Caroline County has changed. He suggested having a workshop session to evaluate and prioritize the roadways. A couple of roads in the north part of the county have seen an increase in usage.

Mr. Jeff Ghrist stated that given the testimony and circumstances on **Ninetown Road**, he was ready to move forward with a decision. On motion by Mr. John Cole, seconded by Mr. Roger Layton, the Roads Board agreed to close the dirt portion of **Ninetown Road**, from **Dean Road** to **Stevenson Road**, with the provision that the roads in the area, especially **Stevenson Road**, be given due consideration to make sure that the travel surfaces are in the best condition possible.

Mr. Jeff Ghrist suggested giving the residents 30 days notice before the Public Works Department closes **Ninetown Road**. Mr. Rick Barton, County Administrator, suggested posting a sign stating the road will be closed to the public effective 30 days from the day the sign is erected.

There being no further County Roads Board business, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

