



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

September 22, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief *JAC*
Community-Based Planning Division

Judy Daniel, Team Leader, Rural Team
Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Maria Martin, Rural Team, Community Planner/Coordinator *MAM*
Community-Based Planning Division (301/495-4734)

SUBJECT: County Council Requests Planning Board Opinion on the Reclassification of Piedmont Road and White Ground Road.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the following roadway classifications:

Road Name	Proposed Classification	Limits	Minimum ROW Width
Piedmont Road	Primary Residential	Stringtown Road to Skylark Road	70'
Piedmont Road	Country Road	Skylark Road to Hawkes Road	70'
White Ground Road	Rustic Road	Entire Length	70'

BACKGROUND

The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee sent a letter, dated April 15, 2003, to the Montgomery County Council requesting that Piedmont Road be deleted from the Rustic Road Program (Attachment 1). Since Piedmont Road was classified as a Rustic Road in the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area, any roadway reclassification would have to take place through a master plan amendment process.

During the County Council's worksession on the rustic roads amendment, Councilmember Michael Knapp requested that consideration be given to reclassifying White Ground Road from a rustic road to an exceptional rustic road. Citizens who live on and in the area near White Ground Road are concerned about the bridge replacement plans and making the area more attractive to cut through truck traffic.

Since the Planning Board Draft of the Rustic Roads Amendment was under consideration by the County Council, the Montgomery County Council on July 15, 2003, authorized a second public hearing to take place on September 9, 2003. At the public hearing, the Council decided to delay the Transportation and Environmental Committee's September 18 worksession on these two roads so the Planning Board and the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee could have the opportunity to consider and forward a recommendation on the appropriate roadway classifications. The County Council public record is open until September 23, 2003. The Council's final action on Piedmont Road and White Ground Road will be incorporated into the rustic roads amendment.

PIEDMONT ROAD

Description: Piedmont Road is approximately 1.66 miles long and connects Stringtown Road (arterial) on the west with Hawkes Road (a rustic road) on the east. It has an 18-foot wide pavement with grass shoulders within a 70-foot right-of-way. The road has both edge lines and center line markings. (See Attachment 2.)

In 1994 when the Clarksburg Master Plan was adopted, one side of Piedmont Road had agricultural uses and those features seem to be the predominant character of the area. The road had outstanding vistas of farm fields and rural landscape along a portion of the road. The road was not needed to serve a major increase in traffic. The road's significant feature was listed as the view of the road as it fits into the adjacent terrain of open fields. It was considered a road with low-volume and low accident counts. (See Attachment 3.)

Subdivision Activity: Since that time, the Tregoning-Dameron subdivision plan has been approved on the southern side of the road adjacent to the two sharp curves. It is a development of 92 homes in a RE-1 cluster layout. Another development that will have a significant impact on the road is the Greenway Village development of 1,330 units. The County will widen the intersection of Skylark Road (primary residential) and Piedmont Road to 24 feet in August 2004.

The remaining land has an approximate redevelopment potential of 22 units according to the adjacent zones maximum possible density. Some of those units might be able to use Hawkes Road as an alternative means of access. The 22 units count does not take into account any development constraints, such as topography, that may limit the number of units that can be achieved on these properties.

Recommendation: In light of the realities of development along and adjacent to Piedmont Road, staff recommends that Piedmont Road from Stringtown Road to Skylark Road receive a Primary Residential classification while continuing the 70-foot right-of-way. The section between Skylark Road and Hawkes Road should receive a Country Road classification and continue the 70-foot right-of-way.

Staff feels a Country Road classification would be appropriate because the road will still carry low volumes of traffic, but some of that traffic will be destined for locations other than along Piedmont Road.

A Primary Residential or Secondary Residential classification was not considered for the section between Skylark Road and Hawkes Road because the classifications would encourage the construction of sidewalks where they might not be needed and in the end detract from the character of the road. Since this road connects to Hawkes Road, a rustic road, staff would like to minimize the affects that roadway improvements would have on Piedmont Road and thus minimize the effects on Hawkes Road. Future residents of the Tregoning-Dameron development will still have pedestrian access to Ovid Hazen Wells Park via trails within the subdivision.

WHITE GROUND ROAD

Description: White Ground Road is approximately 4.6 miles long and connects Darnestown Road (a Country Arterial) to the south with Clopper Road to the north. It has a 20-foot wide pavement with centerline and edge markings between Darnestown Road and Susanna Farm and a 16-foot wide pavement with no centerline and edge markings between Susanna Farm and Clopper Road within a 70-foot right-of-way. (See Attachment 4.)

As a note, the Susanna Farm is on the Montgomery County Locational Atlas, but is also on the National Register of Historic Sites.

The 1996 Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan (Attachment 5) listed the significant features of the road as:

- Relationship of road to Boyds Historic District
- The road parallels a stream and its adjacent wetlands and floodplain
- One-lane bridge and its approaches
- Tree canopy over much of the road

Subdivision Activity: Since the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan was adopted in 1996, a large amount of land along White Ground Road has been put in easements of some kind.

Bridge Improvements: The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation is currently developing a bridge replacement project for White Ground Road Bridge over Buck Lodge Branch and approximately 1000 feet of approach roadway work, 500 feet on each side of the bridge. Stream bank stabilization and realignment of the stream channel are considered a required part of the project to prevent further stream degradation and erosion of the existing stream banks.

The last project description envisioned a replacement structure of two 11-foot travel lanes with a two-foot wide shoulder on each side, for a total bridge roadway width of 26 to 28 feet. The approach roadway work was deemed necessary to transition the new bridge into the existing roadway alignment. (See Attachment 6.) The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee reviewed this project and recommended that the total bridge roadway should be reduced to 20 feet with two 10-foot travel lanes.

This project is on hold and may be re-engineered due to Rustic Road Advisory Committee comments and the pending request to consider a change of roadway classification from Rustic Road to Exceptional Rustic Road, which would require the bridge to be constructed so the new deck would be no wider than the existing deck. Attachment 7 is the bridge replacement text for rustic roads as described in the Montgomery County Executive Regulation On Maintenance And Improvements For Rustic Roads And Exceptional Rustic Roads, and Attachment 8 is the regulations for bridge replacements for exceptional rustic roads.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends retaining the rustic road classification on White Ground Road. White Ground Road had many characteristics that were similar to other roads in the area, which were also designated as rustic roads. As an example, Black Rock Road also has a one-lane steel bridge and is a 15-foot wide paved road. The White Ground Road has a unique character that makes it different from the surrounding roads, which is why it was selected as a rustic road, but it also shares many characteristics of those surrounding rustic roads, which makes it on par with those roads.

Besides a character that is similar to other adjacent rustic roads, staff felt then and now that White Ground Road, though bucolic, did not rise to the same level of exceptional quality as Hunting Quarter Road, Martinsburg Road, Mouth of Monocacy Road, a portion of River Road and West Old Baltimore Road, to name a few.

Howard Chapel Road is also a rustic road with a 14 to 17-foot wide pavement, which recently reopened after the bridge was replaced. The road cuts through Patuxent River State Park and crosses into Howard County with a straighter, wider alignment. The road has a similar difficult alignment coming up to the bridge as it makes a right turn to go into Howard County, crosses a flood plain and up a hill. To shift the alignment of the bridge and road, the road would have to be widened significantly; the bridge would have had to be higher; and the project would have cost significantly more.

Staff recognizes that bridge replacement projects were originally a point of discussion in the development and adoption of the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan and the executive regulations for the maintenance and improvement of rustic and exceptional rustic roads. The realignment and bridge replacement on Peach Tree Road was a reminder that this subject and future projects will continue to be controversial. However, staff believes the design of these bridge replacements should be worked out through design review and change process, and the mandatory referral process, not through the master plan process by changing classifications.