

RUSTIC ROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4th Thursday of the month

7:00-9:00 PM



Meeting Notes - Virtual Meeting December 11, 2025

Attendees:

Members:

Sandy Heiler
Mason Hopkins
Barbara Hoover
Aren Johnson
Tom Linthicum
Jamey Pratt, non-voting
Elena Shuvalov
Richard Thoms
Billy Willard

MCDOT Staff Coordinator: Chris Van Alstyne

MCDOT Management and Budget Specialist I: Tawanda Johnson

Andrea Burton, Property Owner at 19101 Darnestown Road
Florence Dwyer, Montgomery Planning
David McKee, Benning & Associates
Bernie Mihm, Guest
John Stuart, MCDOT
Dale Tibbitts, Special Assistant to the County Executive
Laura Van Etten, Member Emeritus

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Action Items

Approval of Agenda

The committee members approved the updated agenda, which includes the discussion of RRAC statutes.

Approval of Minutes of October 23, 2025, Meeting

Committee members approved the minutes as corrected.

19101 Darnestown Road (Admin Sub. Plan 620260050)

David McKee of Benning & Associates presented plans for a single-family driveway with no FRS requirements off Jerusalem Road to access a new residential building. The committee voted to approve the plans as submitted. McKee noted that Chris Myers, DPS Inspector, was good about ensuring that driveways on rustic roads were 10-foot wide with 5-foot aprons.

Letter to County Executive Concerning Roadside Vegetation Clearing

The committee voted to send the previously approved letter concerning First Energy roadside vegetation clearing to the County executive.

Discussion Items

Q&A on Utility Company Roadside Vegetation Practices

John Stuart of MCDOT's Highway Services Division presented an overview of how utility companies conduct vegetation maintenance. He mentioned that the companies have a four-year maintenance cycle. If a tree touches Montgomery County right-of-way, the company must request a Roadside Tree (RST) permit from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to remove it. The tree(s) are inspected by John and the utility company. John will approve or deny the requests. However, the DNR issues the final permit to remove. John fielded questions from the RRAC regarding herbicides and invasive tree species and stated that herbicides were not requested by MCDOT, even though MCDOT is aware that herbicides are the only method for controlling the invasive Ailanthus tree.

Meeting Schedule for 2026

Committee Chair Tom Linthicum and Chris Van Alstyne to create a schedule for 2026 to present to RRAC at the January meeting. Preliminarily starting with nine meetings for 2026.

Briefing on Chapter 49 Language Regarding the Purpose Clause of the Rustic Roads Law

Laura Van Etten briefed the committee on the Purpose and Implementation clauses of the County Rustic Roads law in Chapter 49, Article 8, Sections 76-79 defining how historic and scenic areas and viewsheds along Rustic Roads must be preserved, and how roads should be maintained to accomplish this mandate, with accommodations for improvements for farm equipment and roadway safety.

Planning Updates

Currently, no updates.

MCDOT Updates & Status of Action Items

The committee members approved the letter of recognition for Dan Sanayi in MCDOT for completing the updates to the county's rustic roads signage.

Nominating committee updates for the open committee positions. There are two interviews left to be completed before sending a recommendation to the County Executive's office. This will be done by the New Year.

Confirm the date of the next meeting

The next meeting date is January 22, 2026.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.