

Garrett County Planning Commission Minutes

April 4, 2023

I. Call to order

Chairman Tony Doerr called the regular meeting of the Garrett County Planning Commission to order at 1:34 pm on April 4, 2023, in the County Commissioners Meeting Room in the Garrett County Courthouse.

II. Attendance

The following Commission members were present: Tony Doerr, Tim Schwinabart, Liz Georg, Bruce Swift, Jeff Messenger and Larry Tichnell. Members of the public included John McCracken, Artie Speicher and Andrew Tvardzik. Planning staff included Bruce Metz, Siera Wigfield, Steve Kelley and Chad Fike.

III. Approval of minutes from last meeting

The minutes were approved as presented.

IV. Reports of Officers- None

V. New Business –

- a) **Wisp Resort Commercial Resort-** John McCracken and Artie Speicher of Wisp Resort presented a proposed mini-golf addition at the Wisp Resort. In the Deep Creek Watershed Zoning Ordinance, the Wisp is classified as an existing Commercial Resort. Mr. Fike explained that expansions that potentially change the character and extent of an existing Commercial Resort are reviewed by the Planning Commission to determine conformity with the Ordinance. The Planning Commission found no issues with the expansion for mini-golf and approved the Commercial Resort expansion by unanimous vote.
- b) **Zoning Appeals Cases-**
 - **SE-503-** An application submitted by Thomas and Genevieve Bean of BRG Enterprises LLC, for a Special Exception to allow the construction of a private indoor boat storage building. The property is located at 391 Pergin Farm Road, Map 66, Parcel 444, and located in an Agricultural Resource zoning district. The Planning Commission recommended to the Board of Appeals that the building should fit with the aesthetic of the community.

- **VR-833**- An application submitted by Frank & Patricia Schimizzi for a Variance to allow the construction of a single-family residence to within 15' of the front property line. The property is located at 829 Beckman Peninsula Road, Map 59, Parcel 349 and is zoned Lake Residential 1. The Planning Commission made no formal comments.
 - SE-504- an application submitted by Brenda McDonnell of Trader's Coffeehouse for a Special Exception to allow a "Drive-thru" in the Town Center zone. The property is located at 19567 Garrett Highway, Map 58, Parcel 460. The Planning Commission made no formal comments.
- c) **County Agricultural Preservation Districts**- Siera Wigfield presented the following proposed district applications. After discussion the Planning Commission approved the applications by a unanimous vote contingent on receiving verification from the Town of Grantsville that application CR-98 was not in a proposed public service area of the Town.
- BC-158 Beverly Stone; 52.7 acres
 - YR-159 Ken & Penny Knox; 165.67 acres
 - CR-98 Joe Yoder; 90.23 acres
 - CR-161 Ethan Carey; 121.67 acres
- d) **Transportation Priority Letter**- Siera Wigfield presented the list of transportation priorities to be submitted to MDOT. The list has been coordinated with the municipalities and SHA. The list is included at the end of these minutes as "APPENDIX 1". After discussion the Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve the list.
- e) **Zoning Discussion**- Chairman Doerr brought up two zoning issues for discussion. The first issue concerned the use of metal storage containers as single-family homes in the Deep Creek Watershed. Mr. Fike explained that the Deep Creek Watershed Zoning Ordinance does not specifically define or regulate storage containers or contain aesthetic standards for residential construction. All types of construction are required to meet applicable building codes and inspection regulations. Discussion points included whether these types of structures are an option for affordable housing and the fact that these structures are similar to single wide trailers that currently require a Special Exception.

The Planning Commission also discussed an accessory building recently constructed in close proximity to Deep Creek Drive. Staff explained that the structure complies with Town Center setbacks. The Commission discussed options such as regulating the size and/or location of accessory buildings.

After discussion the Planning Commission directed staff to prepare information and options for review at future meetings so the Commission can consider whether amendments to the Zoning Ordinance should be considered.

f) Next Meeting – May 3, 2023

VI. Adjournment

Chairman Tony Doerr adjourned the meeting at 2:50 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Chad Fike, Assistant Director

APPENDIX 1- TRANSPORTATION PRIORITY LIST

1. US 219 North Extension to Pennsylvania Stateline

Garrett County is requesting that MDOT continue to dedicate funding for the acquisition of right-of-way and preliminary design for the approximately 1.5-mile section of US 219 North between Old Salisbury Road and the Pennsylvania Stateline, to complete the link between I-68 and Meyersdale, PA. This project is of the utmost importance to the region, as improvements along the US 219 Corridor would enhance access, reduce travel time, and increase reliability for both freight and passenger vehicles, and generate economic opportunity in this region.

2. Pedestrian & Bicycle Concept Plan Connecting Towns along MD 135

Garrett County, the Towns of Loch Lynn Heights, Mountain Lake Park, and Oakland are jointly requesting funding for a concept plan aimed at enhancing safety and improving accessibility for both motorized and non-motorized users along a 1.5-mile section of MD 135. This section of roadway currently experiences excessive traffic speeds in excess of the posted 50 MPH speed limit, posing a significant safety risk to all users. The planning study will produce a concept plan that includes the re-utilization of the right-of-way, the creation of dedicated spaces for bicyclists and pedestrians, and the incorporation of a two-way left-turn lane(s) to enhance traffic flow. This plan will also provide safe and accessible routes to the schools, neighborhoods, and parks in this area, promoting active lifestyles and improving access to local amenities.

3. US 219 Safety Improvements near Trader's Landing – updated

Garrett County requests MDOT/SHA to allocate design and construction funds to improve pedestrian and motorists' safety in the vicinity of Traders Landing. In the fall of 2022 MDOT SHA and Garrett County held a stakeholders meeting. The project team presented an overview of the current conditions that exist on US 219 around Trader's Landing that impact pedestrians as well as multiple options for consideration to improve safety along that route. Based on feedback from the stakeholders Garrett County requests the project to be funded and proceed with the improvements.

4. Oakland to Herrington Manor Trail Concept Plan (new)

Garrett County in partnership with Garrett Trails and the Town of Oakland request funding for a Trail Concept Plan connecting the Town of Oakland to Herrington Manor State Park and Swallow Falls State Park. This proposed trail will be an essential link that provides safe and accessible transportation alternatives to connect residents and visitors to the recreational opportunities offered at Herrington Manor and Swallow Falls State Parks. Currently, there is no direct connection between Oakland and these State Parks; by creating a trail connecting the two, we can improve accessibility to the park for hikers, bikers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. The proposed Trail Concept Plan will evaluate the best route for the trail, address potential obstacles, and provide recommendations on infrastructure, such as signage, parking, and amenities. This plan will provide a roadmap for the development of the trail, ensuring it meets the needs of the community while respecting the natural environment. A crucial component of the Trail Concept Plan development process will be public participation from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders for feedback on the proposed trail's alignment, design, and amenities. We believe that this proposed trail will provide significant benefits to the community, including promoting

active lifestyles, enhancing economic development, and improving access to outdoor recreational opportunities.

5. [US 219 Oakland Bypass - updated](#)

Garrett County and the Town of Oakland request funding for design and engineering for the relocated US 219, extending 2.4 miles from north of Oakland to MD 135. This vital project aims to redirect traffic, especially trucks, away from downtown Oakland, improving safety and traffic flow. The current system experiences several issues, since the extension of Corridor H, which has caused a significant increase in freight and truck traffic through the Town. This traffic congestion on the narrow main street (Oak and Third Streets) has forced local drivers to detour through residential areas, creating dangerous situations for residents in the neighborhoods. By rerouting through traffic, it would alleviate the freight traffic in the Town, making it more attractive for new businesses and increasing the overall livability of Oakland. It is important to note that the new road should not be a 4-lane divided highway but rather a 2-lane highway, like US 219 north and south of Oakland. This approach will address the safety concerns and reduce the strain on the current road system, promoting sustainable and safe transportation alternatives.

6. [US 219 from Mosser Road to Glendale Rd Concept Plan for Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure](#)

Garrett County requests planning funding to evaluate adding safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities to US 219 from Mosser Road to Glendale Road in McHenry, MD. Some of this route has wide shoulders and can accommodate a marked bike lane and the creation of a separate path for non-motorized transportation. Other sections of this roadway are more narrow and present dangers to the non-motorized users. The County would like to provide a safe option along this route.

7. [Grantsville Sidewalk Extension on Alt US 40 to River Road](#)

Garrett County and the Town of Grantsville requests funding for Preliminary Engineering to pursue the Grantsville sidewalk extension on US 40, from the eastern limit of the Town of Grantsville to River Road. In May 2020, MDOT SHA completed a US 40 ALT (Main Street) Sidewalk Feasibility Study for this project showing a new sidewalk within the study limits is feasible. The developed concept plans avoid major structural impacts and provide for minimal increase in impervious area while providing a safe and compliant pedestrian pathway for connectivity from the Town of Grantsville, the State Park, and the Arts and Entertainment District. The concept design proposes approximately 1450 LF to 1875 LF of 5' wide pedestrian pathway along the north side of US 40 Alt, as well as request ramps and crossings.

In addition to the sidewalk extension, we request funding for the installation of a crosswalk at Penn Alps on US40 to the Casselman River access. This crosswalk will improve pedestrian safety by providing a designated area for individuals to cross the road safely, especially considering the high volume of pedestrian traffic in this area. The total cost estimate for both the sidewalk extension and the crosswalk is \$3.9 million dollars. We believe that this project will have a significant positive impact on the safety and livability of the Town of Grantsville and the surrounding areas, and we thank you for your consideration.

8. [MD 135 to Sand Flat Road to MD 219 Operational and Intersection Improvements](#)

Following the US 219 Truck Corridor Study conducted in February 2021, MDOT SHA recommended improvements for Sand Flat Road in Oakland, Maryland, including upgrading shoulders to ten feet, improving geometry, and enhancing the intersections to US 219 and MD

135. To pursue these recommendations, Garrett County is requesting MDOT SHA's preliminary engineering funding for the project.

9. [Oakland, MD North-South Bicycle and Pedestrian Connection Concept Plan](#)

The Town of Oakland is exploring alternative funding sources for a bike and pedestrian route as a safe north-south connection for the residents of Oakland. Rather than requesting funding for the streetscape along US 219, the Town is applying for funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program to develop a concept plan for safe bike and pedestrian access from Oak Street to Walmart. This alternative approach will allow for public participation and input and ensure the project meets the needs and preferences of the Oakland community. By providing a safe and accessible north-south route for pedestrians and cyclists, this project will improve connectivity and encourage active transportation, promoting healthier and more sustainable lifestyles.

10. [Garrett County Transit Operating & Capital Funding](#)

Garrett Transit Service offers demand response public transportation to residents in Garrett County, with a focus on providing safe, reliable, and affordable transportation. To continue fulfilling our mission, we request increased funding for operations, particularly in times of rising fuel costs, to ensure competitive wages for our drivers and dispatchers and retain their services. In addition, we are requesting capital funding for FY 2024 to support preventative maintenance for our vehicles and facility. This will allow us to keep our vehicles in good condition and ensure that our facilities are properly maintained, allowing us to continue providing transit services to our community.

11. [Grantsville, MD 669 Sidewalk Expansion](#)

The Town of Grantsville is expanding water and sewer service along MD 669 and would like to request funding from MDOT for the inclusion of sidewalks along the planned development area.

12. [Friendsville Sidewalks Expansion on First Street](#)

The Town of Friendsville is requesting funding for the construction of sidewalks along First Ave from the I-68 underpass to Chestnut Street. This project is essential for enhancing pedestrian safety and promoting walkability in the town and will provide a safe and accessible walking route for residents and visitors, particularly for those who commute to work or school. We request MDOT SHA's support in funding this project, which will enhance the safety, livability, and accessibility of the town's transportation network. and look forward to the positive impact it will have on the community.

13. [Modernize Traffic Controls at US 219 intersections at Alder Street & Oak Street](#)

The Town of Oakland requests MDOT SHA allocate funds to upgrade traffic control devices on US 219 (Third Street) intersections at Alder and Oak Streets. Currently, the traffic control lights, and crosswalk signals are outdated, having been installed in the 1970s, and require replacement to improve safety and efficiency. The installation of modern traffic controls at these intersections will help ensure the safety of both motorists and pedestrians and will reduce the risk of accidents, increase the visibility of the signals, and ensure compliance with current safety standards. With your support, we can create a safer transportation system for all travelers using these intersections.

14. Accident Town Trail Connection Concept Plan

The Town of Accident is bisected by US 219. The Town of Accident requests funding for a plan to develop a cross-town access trail for pedestrians and bicycles. This plan looks at connecting the Town's parks, designate a safe pedestrian crossing on US 219 and connect to Accident Elementary School. We request MDOT's support for this project and investing in the safety and accessibility of the Town of Accident. Together, we can create a more livable and sustainable community for all residents.

15. Garrett County Strategic Highway Safety Plan

Garrett County is committed to making our roadways safer for all travelers and we have applied for a grant to fund the development of a Local Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Our plan will focus on addressing the concerns and issues specific to our county and will work to identify the most appropriate countermeasures to make our roads safer for all users. We are reaching out to request any support that MDOT can provide to assist us in our efforts to create safer roads for everyone.

16. Trail Design and Engineering Funds for Trail connecting Friendsville to the Pennsylvania Line

Garrett County and the Town of Friendsville are seeking funds for the design and engineering of a trail connecting the Friendsville Community Park to the Pennsylvania State Line and Yough River Lake. The proposed trail would link the existing Kendal Trail and the trails within Friendsville's Community Park, providing a continuous trail system for residents and visitors alike. Garrett County and its partners, including Garrett Trails, have been working towards establishing a sustainable network of trails that cater to the needs of various user groups while having a minimal impact on the environment. This project will greatly enhance the outdoor recreation opportunities in the area while also providing an economic boost to the region.