



# HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS BOARD

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Cory J. Summerson, Chairperson  
Abby Glassberg, Vice Chairperson  
Michael P. McLellan, Member  
Pedro Ramirez, Member  
Alan Whitworth, Member

## Minutes of the Howard County Public Works Board – April 13, 2021

**Members present:** Mr. Cory Summerson, Chairperson, Ms. Abby Glassberg, Vice Chairperson, Mr. Pedro Ramirez, Mr. Michael P. McLellan, and Mr. Alan Whitworth.

**Staff present:** Thomas J. Meunier, Executive Secretary; John Alcorn, Engineering Specialist II, John Seefried, Engineering Manager I; Carl Katenkamp, Acting Chief, Real Estate Services Division; Kamran Sadeghi, Engineering Specialist III, Brandon Love, Chief, Transportation and Special Projects Division, Nic Stewart, Recording Secretary, Real Estate Services Division.

Mr. Summerson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:31 p.m.

1. **Approval of minutes:** Mr. Summerson indicated that the first item on the agenda is the approval of the minutes of March 9, 2021. Mr. Summerson asked if everyone had a chance to review the minutes.

**Motion:** On a motion made by Ms. Glassberg and seconded by Mr. Ramirez, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of March 9, 2021.

### 2. Public Works Board Road Acceptance

- a) **Subdivision:** Subdivision Plat, Doves Fly, Lots 1 - 7 & Lots 9 - 17 & Open Spaces Lots 8, 18, & 19 & Non-Buildable Bulk Parcel A  
R/SW Agreement No. F-17-008 W/S Agreement No. 24-4874-D  
Road Names: Doves Fly Way  
Petitioner: Williamsburg Group L.L.C.

**Staff Presentation:** Mr. Katenkamp, Acting Chief, Real Estate Services Division, indicated that Williamsburg Group L.L.C., a Maryland limited liability company, has presented a petition to the Director of Public Works for the acceptance of a portion of Doves Fly Way located within Doves Fly, Lots 1 - 7 & Lots 9 - 17 & Open Spaces Lots 8, 18, & 19 & Non-Buildable Bulk Parcel A. The Bureau of Engineering has inspected the subdivision and certifies that all public improvements have been constructed in accordance with the approved plans and specifications and meets the criteria for acceptance under the Section 18.202 of the Howard County Code. The Bureau of Engineering recommends that the public improvements be accepted into the County's system of publicly owned and maintained facilities.

**Board Comments:** None.

**Public Testimony:** None.

**Motion:** On a motion made by Mr. Ramirez, and seconded by Ms. Glassberg, the Board unanimously recommended that the Director of Public Works accept the public improvements located in Doves Fly Way located within Doves Fly, Lots 1 - 7 & Lots 9 - 17 & Open Spaces Lots 8, 18, & 19 & Non-Buildable Bulk Parcel A into the County's system of publicly owned and maintained facilities.

### **3. Scenic Road Projects**

#### b) J-4211 - Gorman Rd and Skylark Intersection Improvement (first hearing)

Prior to the staff presentation Mr. Summerson opened the floor to hear public testimonials as suggested by Mr. Seefried. Mr. Summerson further explained the Board Members had received eight (8) testimonials via email from Harry Cikanek, Kathleen Kujawa, Fred Leong, Richard Flynn, Mitesh Parikh, David Chen, Christine Flaker and Sandra Toalston. Mr. Summerson then opened the floor to hear each individual testimonial prior to the staff presentation.

**Public Testimony prior to Staff Presentation:** Mr. Vik Sheth spoke on behalf of the Emerson Community Association Board, which was unanimously approved to be read. Mr. Sheth's testimony began as follows; Good evening, I represent the community of Emerson and the Emerson Community Association, which is in North Laurel and almost completely surrounds the intersection in question tonight.

When coming south on Gorman Road, you will see our clubhouse across the "T" intersection, and our community is made up of apartments, townhouses, single-family homes on the east and west sides of the intersection. We have over 1,000 homes within our development and a large corporate office campus, and a wide variety of over 7,000 people who live and work here.

If you travel down Skylark Boulevard from the Gorman-Gorman-Skylark intersection, you will reach Gorman Crossing Elementary School and Murray Hill Middle School that helps anchor half of our Emerson community. The intersection is thus an integral part of our daily life and virtually impossible to avoid.

As the community around us has grown we have seen an increase in traffic at the intersection, and more growth is planned. Members of our community have talked with County officials as far back as 2018 for help with this intersection and the flow of traffic through it. The County recently converted it to a 3-way stop which has helped us as we navigate through this intersection.

However, the County also planned to take further measures to assist the flow of traffic including potentially adding a right turn lane from Gorman Road to Skylark Boulevard. This seems to have fallen to the wayside as the County now plans to expand the road from the east part of Gorman to instead place a right turn from Gorman to Gorman. We think there is a way to shift the lanes over to incorporate a right turn lane from Gorman to Skylark, and possibly have the right turn lane from Gorman to Gorman. Respectfully, we want the County to consider this "four lanes" option.

In general, however, this Gorman-Gorman right turn lane plan does not address the concerns or issues that the Emerson community has experienced at the intersection. "We are concerned that the proposed lane would not only not address the concerns we currently have expressed but would instead hamper our ability to get further traffic mitigation measures in the future."

We know that traffic at this intersection will increase in the next couple of years as a new development goes forward a mile away on a parcel of land bounded by Gorman and Leishear. With increased traffic

from that development, more business relocating to the Emerson Corporate Commons office campus, the Emerson community will face additional issues at our main intersection.

The County has an opportunity now to both fulfill its past commitments to the community to address future traffic choking and be proactive instead of reactive to known traffic changes.

We request that any changes to the intersection reflect a holistic approach and understanding of both the current traffic patterns as well as the known future changes. To that end, we request that any changes to the intersection to include at a minimum the right turn lane from Gorman Road to Skylark Boulevard.

**Ms. Christine Flager** expressed that she agreed with the statement read by Mr. Sheth. She explained that she had also written an email testimonial. She did not have anything further to add, but wanted to reiterate that she agreed with what Mr. Sheth had said.

**Ms. Marcy Isaacs** also stated that she did not send a letter, although she further agreed with what Mr. Sheth had said.

**Ms. Becca Nyberg** stated that she was one of the people that Mr. Sheth was referring to in the statement he read. She further stated that she has had conversations with the County about the intersection since 2018, and she has been frustrated with the County rolling back the proposals with regard to this intersection as she has experienced the back up with traffic personally. She felt the proposed right turn would actually make it harder for her or other residents to make a left hand turn out of her development onto Gorman Road Southbound as she would then have to cross two lanes of traffic rather than one, and she has not seen that this area is the actual pinch point.

**Staff Presentation:** **Mr. John Seefried**, Acting Chief of Bureau of Engineering, began by introducing himself and explaining his experience and years within the County. He stated that the presentation would consist of the Gorman to Gorman right turn proposal that the community is not in favor of. He further stated that he is new to the project being the Acting Chief and he attending the meeting to hear the concerns of the residents. He also asked for a study to be conducted and will speak to the issues that have come up so far within the study. Mr. Seefried stated he will have some dialogue at the end of Mr. Sadeghi's presentation at which he will hear any further comments and try to answer any concerns. He further stated the whole intent is to improve the intersection and the department is hearing the residents' comments and taking them seriously in a good faith effort to better the community as a whole, as well as the neighboring community. At that point, Mr. Seefried asked Mr. Sadeghi to present his project.

**Mr. Kamran Sadeghi** then took over with a power point presentation with regard to the Capital Project J-4211, Gorman Rd. Improvement at Skylark Boulevard Intersection. Mr. Sadeghi explained the general feeling of this project is that it will improve the intersection, but as he has spoken with residents through emails and telephone calls, he is aware it will not solve a fair amount of people's concerns and/or problems with the intersection in question. It is his hope that through this meeting and presentation, a common ground can be found and the process that needs to be taken will be resolved. Mr. Sadeghi proceeded with his presentation by showing an aerial view of Gorman Road which included a table of a traffic study done in 2019 pre-covid. The current condition showed the level of service for traffic traveling south bound on Gorman Rd. Mr. Sadeghi explained the current south bound condition on Gorman Road was given a grade of "C" for morning traffic and a grade of "D" for the afternoon traffic

at the intersection. There is a three way stop sign at the Gorman intersection, and Mr. Sadeghi then showed a slide of what the project is proposing at this time. The proposed design would add a right turn lane from Gorman west bound to Gorman north bound which would give travelers their own lane to turn right at the stop sign. Mr. Sadeghi emphasized that this study was done pre-covid, therefore, normal traffic patterns were studied at the time, and the study also considered the impact of the development of the Milk Producers Plant. Mr. Sadeghi then moved to the next slide in the presentation which consisted of two tables comparing the traffic back up.

The left table of the slide showed statistics for the Gorman to Gorman right turn proposed project. He stated the peak time for traffic backup for the Gorman-to-Gorman right turn was the evening hours which resulted in 105 foot back up behind the stop bar. The improvement would be saving 13 feet. Overall, the level of service for the intersection as a whole would be a grade of "B" in the morning and "C" in the afternoon. One of the things considered with this proposed design was that utilities would not have to be relocated and no land would need to be acquired. The estimated cost of the project would be \$400,000, and the County could complete the project this season.

The right side of the slide showed the statistics for the south bound Gorman to west bound Skylark, which was an option that the same study also considered and analyzed. The south bound Gorman left turn did still receive a grade of "C" for the evening level of service, however, Mr. Sadeghi pointed out that now west bound Gorman to Skylark received a grade of "F" in the evening, which would produce overall grades of "C" and "D" for the intersection as a whole. Mr. Sadeghi stated that this option would require Forest Conservation Mitigation and a Right-of-Way acquisition. It would reduce pedestrian safety by extending the distance of the north bound leg crossing, and result in a poor operating condition of the west bound Gorman Rd approach, and the estimated cost of the project including cost of utility relocation would be \$1,000,000.00.

Mr. Sadeghi further explained this study and project were presented for the right turn lane from Gorman to Gorman, which is understood that it will not eliminate the problem, but would be a step in the right direction to alleviate some of the traffic back up. He then requested the Board's recommendation for moving the project forward and said he would be happy to answer any other questions.

Mr. Seefried then said he was open to dialogue to make sure the County understands and hears the concerns of the community as well.

At this time, Mr. Summerson asked for questions from the Board.

**Board Comments:** Ms. Glassberg asked if a roundabout was ever considered, if there was enough room for a roundabout and if the roundabout would have solved any problems? Mr. Sadeghi explained that the traffic study also looked into a possible roundabout, which would have produced the best level of service grade at the intersection, although the land acquisition required for the roundabout would have extended the timeframe of the project. Ms. Glassberg further asked if the developers of the Milk Producers Plant parcel would be required to pay for improvements to the intersection, and Mr., Sadeghi asked Mr. Seefried to answer. Mr. Seefried explained the Milk Producers property is not connecting to Skylark Boulevard with the present proposal, therefore, their improvements do not reach this intersection currently. Ms. Glassberg asked if the additional traffic from the Milk Producers property would be using the intersection, and Mr. Seefried explained that a traffic study was done, and at this time the additional traffic would not make a right into the community. Ms. Glassberg further asked where the right turn would start and would it impede people trying to make a left? Mr. Seefried then explained he was wondering the same thing as by adding the right turn lane it would now present

people having to make a left hand turn over two lanes rather than one. Mr. Ramirez asked who owns the land that would need to be acquired in order for the Right-of-Way. Mr. Sadeghi explained the land is owned by Emerson Community, although it is a parcel that is being used for Forest Conservation Mitigation so when they developed Emerson the land was designated as forest conservation mitigation. Mr. Summerson asked if the main issue was the relocation of the Verizon equipment, and Mr. Sadeghi confirmed that was correct. Mr. Sadeghi further explained the real issue was the time and the cost.

Mr. Summerson asked if there were any other questions from the Board. Ms. Glassberg further asked Mr. Seefried if it would be possible for the Milk Producers to connect to Skylark in the future, as it was stated before that the Milk Producers would not be connecting to Skylark at this time. Mr. Seefried replied by stating that he asked Planning and Zoning what the plan was and Mr. Seefried stated there were some environmental issues and there are no known plans as of right now. Mr. Sadeghi further reiterated that the right turn lane from the merger from Skyhoop Road to Gorman Road would really just be taking the grass bump area out from the side of the road in order to extend the right turn lane. Mr. Brandon Love, Chief, Transportation and Special Projects, further stated the total length of delay for traffic for the right turn coming out of Skyhoop Road turning west bound would be 210 feet and total length between intersections is about 490 feet, therefore, there shouldn't be any impact to the vehicles making the right turn.

**Public Testimony:** Ms. Jean Silver Isenstadt, 10174 Deep Skies Dr., stated that she believes the proposed right lane will ease traffic to the Gorman NB right turn, but also make it harder for residents leaving Wincopia Gardens to leave the neighborhood or the adult residential community. Ms. Isenstadt also stated that she would like to not see Skylark become a bypass. Ms. Isenstadt further stated she worries the proposed right turn would actually create more traffic. Mr. Sagedhi does not see the proposed right turn impeding with the communities north of Gorman. Mr. Summerson asked if the intersection would still stay a three way stop sign. Mr. Sadeghi confirmed that it would stay a three way stop. Mr. Sadeghi further stated that the Gorman to Gorman right turn as well as adding a right turn lane from Gorman to Skylark would be the best option short of a roundabout. Mr. Seefried stated that the numbers the County has do not support the belief that the proposed right turn would create more traffic, but he would make note of it.

Ms. Sheila Kates, 9806 June Flowers Way, stated that she lives in the townhomes to the left of the intersection. She noted that the stop signs have made a difference and the traffic situation has improved. She further stated that she would have an issue with the cost to move the Verizon utility shed to create an extra lane. She feels the funds could be going to other needs. She questioned how long the proposed right turn lane would be in terms of length. Mr. Sadeghi stated that the length after moving the Verizon box would be 120 feet of backup which would require moving the Verizon cabinet. Mr. Sadeghi stated that 100-200 feet would be needed. Ms. Kates asked if there would be as many cars coming from Gorman to Skylark as Gorman to Gorman. Ms. Kates asked if the County would consider making improvements and explore other options in the future. Mr. Seefried agreed that these improvements may not be the final and that in the future more may be needed. He stated that the traffic study helps to address traffic issues.

Ms. Lynn Dallas, 9766 Knowledge Drive, stated she lived in the 76 house community near the intersection. Ms. Dallas stated that there have been many problems with the speed of traffic on Gorman Road and that any improvement that increases the speed on Gorman Road is not in the best interest of her community. Ms. Dallas further stated that there have been vehicles that do not stop at the crosswalk, and that that she has witnessed vehicles failing to stop coming from Skylark to Gorman.

Ms. Dallas felt a roundabout would help to control the speed of traffic. Ms. Dallas' main concern is the proposed right turn from Gorman to Gorman, and expressed her concern that vehicles will not stop.

Ms. Kathleen Kujiwaw, 10108 Deep Skies Drive expressed concerns that kids and families will now have three lanes to cross instead of two lanes. She pointed out that the crossing guards will now have three lanes to control. She further asked if there would be more crossing guards added. Mr. Seefried explained that the widening of pavement would increase more traffic. He explained that there it has been suggested that the study evaluate a mid-block crossing which could possibly alleviate some of the risk of the children crossing coming from the community to the west.

Ms. Becca Nyberg, respectfully declined to state her address. Ms. Nyberg stated that she felt moving the crosswalk would create an even more dangerous situation for pedestrians. She stated that cars often fail make a full stop or stop at all at the crosswalk. Ms. Nyberg expressed concern over her children having to cross three lanes of traffic.

Ms. Sheliza Inasi, 9528 Star Moon Lane, stated that she has three young children, and that the proposed right turn from Gorman to Gorman directly affects her family. She explained that traffic does not stop and believes the intersection is already dangerous without adding a right turn. She agreed that expanding the crosswalk due to the added right turn lane would make the crosswalk even more dangerous. Mr. Julian Inasi, Sheliza's husband, expressed his concerns about the intersection being dangerous. He stated that there is more of a backup when it is raining. Mr. Inasi further stated that a stop sign would not be enough to calm the traffic.

Mr. Tom Renkevins, 8629 Jennifer Court, has lived in the community for over 20 years. He thanked Public Works for the three-way stop and other current improvements. He shares the concerns regarding the crosswalk and the safety of the intersection. He asked if the County had reviewed previous plans to connect Skylark Boulevard to 216, which he believed would help to alleviate traffic. Mr. Summerson asked if this was an option. Mr. Seefried stated that the plan to connect Skylar Road to 216 is not being considered at the time.

Ms. Christine Flager, 8528 Light Moon Way, stated that she agrees with the others in her community regarding the crosswalk. She asked why the area on the east side couldn't be used to widen the road instead of the right side. Mr. Seefried stated that the utilities would have to be relocated. Mr. Love stated that at least three poles would have to be relocated and that land acquisition would be necessary. Mr. John Alcorn further stated that the trees were cleared for the addition of a gas main that went up the east side of Gorman, therefore a left turn would impact the gas main as well. Ms. Flager noted that she supports the widening of Gorman Road.

Ms. Erica Roberts, 9608 Silken Leaf Court, can see the intersection from her house and has witnessed accidents. She asked if it was possible to show the community what the pedestrian foot traffic would look like. Ms. Roberts stated that this would give everyone a better understanding of the pedestrian flow. Mr. Seefried stated that they would certainly come back and ask for public comment.

Ms. Tracey Jackson, Light Moon Way, wanted a better understanding of the location of a second crosswalk. Mr. Seefried stated that he is not proposing at this time, but the location that has been discussed would probably be located further down Skylark Boulevard. Ms. Jackson asked about the possibility of a speed bump and asked if this would a possibility. Mr. Seefried said he would be happy to ask the traffic division what has been proposed for the Gorman Road.

Ms. Marcy Isaacs, 8609 Vintage Earth Path, stated that she is east of I-95 and that she is a resident who uses the Gorman-to-Gorman right turn. She feels that the intersection is a “hot mess”, and also feels that making vehicles stop further back would help make things safer. She also stated that she is adamantly against adding a third lane.

Ms. Jean Silver Isenstadt, asked if the sidewalk running along the right turn lane would be eliminated. Mr. Seefried stated that the sidewalk would stay.

Ms. Becca Nyberg, Light Moon Way, stated that she’s been corresponding with the County since 2017. She finds it frustrating that the County hasn’t consulted with the community. Ms. Nyberg expressed that the Community has suggested many alternatives and feel that their voices have not been heard. Ms. Nyberg asked that this be looked at more holistically. Mr. Love stated he appreciates the concern the community has and the has personally been in contact with Stephanie, a representative of Emerson. Brandon further expressed that safety is a concern and the County and he is doing the best to address it. Mr. Seefried stated he will facilitate a meeting with representatives of the community.

Mr. Aaron Criss, 9834 Snow Bird Lane, asked about the possibility of a roundabout and if it would be feasible in the future. Mr. Sadeghi explained that the roundabout was studied in the traffic study and received the best grade. He stated that land would have to be acquired and the roundabout would go in the middle of the intersection.

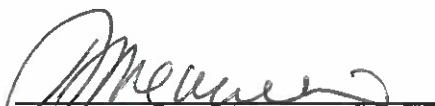
Ms. Jean Silver Isenstadt asked if a traffic light option was considered as and explained that she believed it would help with safety issues. Mr. Love stated that a traffic signal study had been completed and found that a signal would not be warranted at this time. Ms. Isenstadt asked what determines whether a signal is warranted. Mr. Love explained that there are various federal requirements and told Ms. Isenstadt that he would look into the details.

Mr. Vic Sheth thanked the County to allow the Community to speak as a whole and asked if would be easier to engage the community upfront before making decisions. Mr. Seefried stated that Mr. Love would be reaching out to schedule a meeting for further discussion.

Mr. Summerson asked if Mr. Seefried had any further statements and he did not. Mr. Summerson then asked if there were any other questions from the Board. Mr. Summerson further stated that the goal for these meetings is to engage the public and for their concerns to be heard. Mr. Summerson stated there was much to be followed up on and asked Mr. Seefried if he had anything to add. Mr. Seefried summarized the concerns he had, citing the 216 connection and any history, traffic issues, speed hump and traffic signal, as well as a follow up meeting with Stephanie and Vic to see what may be possible in the future.

Mr. Summerson then thanked Mr. Michael McLellan for his time serving as a Board Member as this was his last meeting. Mr. Summerson read a letter from County Executive Calvin Ball thanking Mr. McLellan for his time as well as a Certificate of accomplishment.

There being no further business, the Public Works Board meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m.

  
Thomas J. Meunier  
Executive Secretary

  
Nic Stewart  
Recording Secretary