

**CR 28-2016 Scenic Road Designation for Haviland Mill Road**

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**Sent:** Friday, February 26, 2016 7:10 AM**To:** CouncilMail**Attachments:** councilscenicroad.docx (17 KB)

Dear Howard County Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony concerning CR28-2016, a resolution adding Haviland Mill Road to the county inventory of scenic roads. We would particularly like to thank council member Greg Fox for introducing the resolution.

We believe it is very clear that Haviland Mill road meets the criteria laid out in Subtitle 14 – The Scenic Roads Act - to be designated a scenic road. The regulation lists four characteristics (Section 16.1402., Characteristics of scenic roads) for consideration as a scenic road and states that to be considered a scenic road, one or more of the characteristics must be met. Haviland Mill Road meets all four of the characteristics as described below:

1) Characteristic 1 – “Pass through an area of outstanding natural features providing views of scenic elements such as forests, steep topography, and stream or river valleys. “

Haviland Mill Road possesses all of these natural features. Approximately one third the length of the road is forest, steep topography is present, and the Patuxent River is a major feature in vistas from the road.

2) Characteristic 2 – “Provide outstanding views of rural, agricultural landscapes including scenic elements such as panoramic or distant second views, crop land, pastures, fields, streams, ponds, hedgerows, stone or wooden fence, farm buildings and farmsteads.”

Haviland Mill Road provides views of agricultural landscapes with one third the length of the road being agricultural. Rolling pastures, rows of trees, stretches of wooden fences, and several picturesque barns form an impressive agricultural panorama.

3) Characteristic 3 – “Follow historic road alignments and provide views of historic resources”

The historic association of the road is most evident in its very name – a saw mill was built on the banks of the river around 1840. The mill was purchased by Merritt Haviland in 1895 and converted into a grist mill.

Four historic homes, dating back hundreds of years, are visible from the road. In addition, two historic cemeteries are located in the vicinity of the road. One (the Nichols family cemetery) is preserved by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and contains plaques and a monument giving the history of the family and the cemetery.

4) Characteristic 4 – “A large proportion of the road provides frontage for properties that are in a historic district or subject to perpetual or long-term agricultural, environmental or historic easements.

There are a total of four agricultural and or conservation easements along the road. There is also land owned by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and county property which provides one of the only trout fisheries in the Washington area.

We would also like to point out that the section of Haviland Mill Road located in Montgomery County has been designated a Rustic Road –their equivalent of our Scenic Roads. The Montgomery County's Rustic Roads Advisory Committee supports the designation of Haviland Mill Road in Howard County a scenic road. A copy of their letter is attached in case you have not had an opportunity to review it.

We are aware that the Department of Planning and Zoning has provided a memorandum recommending denial of the designation of Haviland Mill Road as a scenic road. Frankly, we disagree with their assessment and find that there is much more material in their memorandum supporting the scenic road designation than refuting it. They describe the road itself as "...narrow, winding, and rolling..." and scenic features are described as "...a forested area, rolling pastures, rows of trees or hedgerows, several picturesque barns, wooden fences, and the Patuxent River."

The memorandum states that Haviland Mill Road is predominately residential in character. However, one mile of the one and six tenths total mileage of the road (65%) is either agricultural or forested. There are only a total of 28 homes along the road– four of which are historic and contribute greatly to the scenic nature of the road. Finally, the memorandum itself describes the structures as "...homes on large lots with mature trees and substantial setback." This hardly seems a description of structures that ruin scenic vistas.

The memorandum also describes certain features—an eroding stream, utility lines, a partially visible transmission line, and metal guard rails—as weighing against designation of the road as scenic. There is a periodically flowing stream along a stretch of the road. We believe that this steam adds scenic value rather than detracts from the views. Utility lines are present, but that is simply a necessary fact of modern life, and common to all roads that have been designated as scenic. The transmission line is only visible when there is no foliage on trees and even then only in the distance. Only 0.5% of the road has safety guard rails, not enough to make a significant visual impact.

We would like to conclude by thanking the council members for their service to Howard County and by urging them to vote yes on CR28-2016. Let's make Haviland Mill Road a scenic road!

Friends of Haviland Mill Road

Victor Bullen, Brooke Farquhar, Martha Mann, Jenny Marrow, Theresa Marrow, Kathy Stowe, and Lloyd Stowe