

Pine Brook Hills

February 8, 2010

Dear PineBrook Hills Resident,

We are the new Co-Chairs of the PineBrook Hills Roads Committee. This letter is being sent to you to provide information on how to become informed and take action on an issue critical to PineBrook Hills residents.

Boulder County is in the process of evaluating the status of roads in each of the county's subdivisions. George Gerstle, our County Transportation Director, formed a Subdivision Paving Work Group (WG) last summer to develop a proposal and make recommendations to the Boulder County Commissioners on the best way to plan and finance road improvements not covered by current taxes. The WG is made up of volunteer residents from each of the Boulder County Subdivisions. Pinebrook Hills was invited to participate, but no one from our neighborhood joined the WG, so we are playing catch-up to inform each of you about the issues.

In December 2009, the WG presented its [findings and recommendations](#) to the Department of Transportation and a public meeting was held on January 26 where George Gerstle presented information about the WG proposal and answered questions. A website with WG information is maintained at: <http://www.bouldercounty.org/transportation/SubdivisionPaving.htm>.

Steve Sheafor attended the meeting on January 26 representing PineBrook Hills. At Cindy Lindsay's invitation, George Gerstle also attended the PineBrook Hills HOA meeting the following evening, making the same presentation and answering questions. We have attached a message from George which describes where to find the Presentation on line, and describes some of the key points. There is a lot of detailed information in George's Presentation and from the Q&A sessions, so below is a summary of the key items and some specific PineBrook Hills information.

SUMMARY

Every three years, Boulder County hires a company to do a complete survey of every piece of paved road in the county. The roads are rated with a Pavement Quality Index (PQI), a rating from 0 to 10, where 10 is the best. Quality is primarily a function of the density of cracks in the asphalt, which is generally a very good indicator of road quality and potential for deterioration. The following table shows some of the key results. Every piece of pavement is classified as Good, Fair or Poor as a function of its PQI.

	Good	Fair	Poor
All Boulder County - 2006	62%	22%	16%
All Boulder County - 2009	44%	37%	19%
Primary Roads - 2009	66%	22%	12%
Subdivision Roads - 2009	31%	36%	34%
Pinebrook Roads - 2009	17%	52%	32%

This table reveals three key facts:

- 1) The roads in Boulder County are deteriorating.
- 2) The roads in the Subdivisions are much worse than the Primary Roads.
- 3) Pinebrook roads are noticeably worse than the typical Subdivision.

This situation arises because since 1995 the County has had the policy that the obligation to resurface Subdivision roads lies with those who benefit from them, as well as a policy of focusing available funds on primary roads because relatively few people use the Subdivision roads compared to the Primary County roads. Thus the vast bulk of resurfacing over the years has occurred on the main roads. Since PineBrook is one of the older Subdivisions, our roads would be expected to be in poorer than average shape.

Note that there is an important distinction between maintaining roads and resurfacing them to improve the PQI. Maintenance includes plowing, repairing potholes, and many other minor activities, including occasionally resurfacing very poor areas. The County spends on average \$79/year per property for Maintenance in the Subdivisions, and we pay on average \$8.73/year per property in Road and Bridge Property Tax, so we actually receive more services on average than we pay in taxes. In the past three years from 2007 through 2009, the County spent \$363,000 on Maintenance in PineBrook Hills, with the major items including Sanding and Plowing (\$158,000 or 44%), Pothole Patching (\$62,000 or 17%), and Surface Reconditioning (\$50,000 or 14%).

The WG considered the significant deterioration in road quality and felt that action needed to be taken. As a road deteriorates, repairing it becomes more and more expensive. This is particularly true in our climate where snowplows tend to catch on cracked asphalt and tear the road up more quickly.

Based on the 2009 PQI survey, the Transportation Department determined that it would take roughly \$22 million to bring all the roads in the County Subdivisions to a PQI of 7.5, which is considered good. The fastest this could reasonably be accomplished is 5 years, so the WG used that as the time frame goal. The WG set about determining the best way to finance such a project, since the County has not had and does not have funds to budget for repaving projects. The county estimates that \$970,000 of the \$22 million would be required to bring all of the PineBrook Hills roads to a good PQI.

The WG examined a number of funding alternatives, but Colorado state law limits the number of valid approaches. In the end, the WG decided that there were only two viable mechanisms to fund country road resurfacing:

- 1) Create a Public Improvement District (PID) for all of the Subdivisions.
- 2) Create a Local Improvement District (LID) for all of the Subdivisions.

Note that it is possible to create many small PIDs or LIDs for groups or single Subdivisions, but the WG felt multiple Improvement Districts would be much more complex and expensive to manage.

The following table summarizes the key features of each alternative.

Funding Mechanism	Requires a Public Vote	Time Frame	Funding Measure
PID	Yes	Open-ended	% of Property Value
LID	No	Fixed Length	Generally Per Parcel

These differences created a dilemma for the WG. They felt strongly that resurfacing work needed to be done now, and the current economy would make it difficult to get a public vote passed to fund the resurfacing. An LID can be created directly by the County Commissioners, so it can happen quickly to address current needs. Even if the roads are brought up to good quality in five years using an LID to fund the work, there is a need for ongoing projects to keep the roads in good repair, but, by law, the LID must have a defined time frame.

The funding measure is one of the most contentious issues, as you would expect, because it involves the concept of "fairness". A per parcel charge, which is by far the most straightforward method of funding an LID, is fair in the sense that everyone uses the roads in the same way independent of the value of their property. A mill levy charge as a percentage of property value is fair in the sense that improved roads increase property values, which benefits everyone roughly in proportion to the value of their property.

Based on all of this data, the WG recommended a combined strategy. The first phase is to implement an LID now, for 5 years, to bring the roads to an acceptable quality. The second phase, to be implemented in the next 2 to 3 years as the economy improves, is to define and vote on a PID which would take over ongoing improvements and keep the roads in good condition. This uses both types of funding and therefore seems to be a good "fairness" compromise.

There are roughly 10,670 property parcels in all the Subdivisions. To fund a \$22 million LID in five years would require about \$407 per parcel per year. The WG felt that, although bringing all roads up to good condition is a

great goal, this is too much to ask property owners to pay in this economy. As a result, their recommendation for the LID was only \$200 per parcel per year. This was felt to be adequate to stem the deteriorating situation and begin to make improvements, which will save significant money in the long run. The PID, instead of simply providing for keeping the roads in their current condition starting in 5 years, would be placed before the voters with funding large enough to handle the remainder of the required resurfacing over the next few years.

PineBrook Hills has about 420 parcels, so if we were to pay for our own roads only for the next five years (by creating our own LID, for example) we would have to pay about \$460 per parcel per year, so we have an advantage in the overall County approach because our roads are in relatively poorer shape.

The law requires that funds collected by an LID must be allocated specifically to the purpose of the LID, in this case road reconstruction in the Subdivisions. We have seen E-mails claiming that these funds would be used for other purposes, which is definitely incorrect. In addition, state law requires there must be a reasonable relationship between what a property owner pays and what they receive. This means that Subdivision residents will not be paying for work done in other Subdivisions.

There is an appropriate concern that the lack of a public vote on the LID is a negative. Note, however, that although the Commissioners can create this without a vote, they are responsive to the wishes of their constituents - us. They recognize that repairing roads now will save money in the future, but they will not go against significant public opposition.

The Commissioners are currently evaluating options relative to Subdivision roads. Their objective is to begin the formal decision making process sometime in late February or early March. The Boulder County Commissioners conduct public hearings on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Agendas are published in the Daily Camera and online – [Boulder County Commission Meeting Agendas](#). Meetings are held in the Boulder County Courthouse, Third Floor, Pearl and 13th Streets. For more information, call the Boulder County Commissioners' Office at 303-441-3500.

Improving our roads is an extremely important issue for PineBrook Hills and we encourage you to contact the Transportation Department and the Commissioners to express your opinion on the WG's proposal.

OPINION BASED ON OUR INITIAL RESEARCH

Our initial assessment of the facts provided by the WG is that we are in a 'pay me now or pay me (more) later' situation. The county does not and will not have funds from any source other than subdivision residents to pay for more than basic levels of road maintenance. Without funds for road resurfacing, a significant deterioration of PineBrook Hills roads will occur over the next few years. A comment made at the January public meeting provides an interesting perspective - in a conversation about gravel roads (which aren't covered by the WG proposal), someone said, "If we don't do something about the problem of road deterioration, pretty soon all of our subdivision roads will be gravel!"

It is also important to note that none of the funding decisions has any affect on the normal maintenance of our roads. That work is already budgeted by the County and will continue independent of anything which happens relative to the resurfacing proposal.

You can contact George Gerstle at ggerstle@bouldercounty.org if you have questions - he is incredibly helpful, and knows the area well, since he grew up in the neighborhood just below PineBrook Hills. We are far from experts in this area, but feel to contact either of us at:

steves4567@comcast.net or cindy12001@comcast.net

If you are interested on working on the PineBrook Hills Roads Committee, we are looking for volunteers to help with this and future issues regarding the roads in our neighborhood.

Thank you.

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