

Mayor Paul Gordon
City of Frederick
Frederick, Md. 21701

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Md. 21702
1/4/91

Dear Mr. Gordon,

It is right and proper for citizens to petition ^{OR} ~~for~~ the redress of grievances as it is for public authority to consider such petitions. But it is not right for such petitions to be met with unteasonable, unbalanced or unjustified gestures that amount to kowtowing to the loud minority at the cost of the majority.

This is what the city has done with the inadequately-marked prohibition of left turns onto Shookstown Road from Rosemont Avenue. It has solved nothing, it makes the city look ridiculous, it ignores more dangerous conditions on Shookstown Road and it is rapidly giving the city that solicits tourism the reputation of being a speedtrap that discourages the tourism the city seeks to attract.

And in its enforcement the city is grossly unfair.

Yesterday a young friend of mine was one of its 88 reported victims.

This young man was a master's candidate at College Park when I assisted him with his thesis that became a prize-winning TV documentary. He left for California with his degree and a \$40,000 debt. When he came to see me on his first trip back, driving as he had always driven, he did not see the ^{no} left-turn sign and became one of the 88. When he told the officer that it was a new prohibition, that he had not seen the sign and did not know of the new prohibition, the officer told him it was in the papers and therefore she should have known. ~~an~~ the papers in California?

Today's paper also reports that Frederick is trying to get movie/TV production for the city. What do you think this young man will tell those with whom he now works in those kinds of productions about considering Frederick as a locale? I would not expect ^{him} to say what he would have before yesterday, that it is a fine place.

Traffic problems are characteristic of all growing areas and increased traffic on streets not designed to carry that traffic is certainly a safety concern. But there are greater dangers ^{elsewhere} on Shookstown Road, some can be relieved for a ^{trifling} ~~trifling~~ ^{sum} ~~sum~~ and the city has resolutely refused to make these inexpensive ^{gestures} ~~gestures~~. For the past three years I have asked the city to paint a stripe along the edges of the road, especially where the county had stripes before the city took those sections over and obliterated the stripes when resurfacing. Each year it was acknowledged as necessary, promised if possible and promptly forgotten. This year the painting crews were in the area often, most recently in painting the new 20mile limit on the road surface, but the inexpensive stripes marking the edges for the not uncommon bad weather, particularly fog, were not painted. I spoke to you about this some months ago and you then told me that road improvements would begin within two months, so I did not again try to persuade those under you to keep their promises. Those improvements have not begun. and the real, not the imaginary, dangers exist.

Over the years utility poles snapped off by autos have been a common sight, two within a few weeks after I spoke to ~~you~~ you about the real danger in poor visibility. There are utility poles not much more than a foot from the road surface and few that are as much as three feet away, a distance much smaller than the usual stoned shoulders. These are not accidents that people imagine, they are real and they are repeated and repeated. and they certainly can be serious if not fatal.

It is not uncommon to see autos driven off the road and mired in a muddy field at the intersection with Waverly Drive and that is a particularly dangerous area ^{when} with there is fog. Three times after speaking to you and when I was driving slowly and carefully I passed Waverly without being able to see the intersection because the fog was that dense. With the almost immediate sharp turn onto the wooden bridge this is an even greater danger and I've seen quite a few snapped-off utility poles right there.

At the other wooden bridge, closed to Rosement, drivers are and have been remarkably courteous. This is one of the conditions supposedly addressed with the speed trap now in place. It is not a dangerous situation and it cannot begin to compare with the danger ~~is~~ farther out on Shookstown Road. But those ^{ING} make a loud special pleading were heard and the real dangers continue to be ignored.

The very motorists who are so polite at the single-lane bridge are inconsiderate in driving toward it at the intersection with Montevue Lane and many if not ~~most~~ do not bother to indicate they will not turn left. This stalls outgoing traffic and creates a hazard, particularly when those intending to turn left do not ^{SIGNAL} ~~single~~ their intention. Is it possible that those in the city government supposedly concerned about driving safety are not aware of this? Could they not at the least conceive that a ^{ING} sign requesting drivers to use their turn signals might be helpful - and quite inexpensive?

Yesterday alone the city grossed almost \$5,000 from its speed trap. Is that not more than enough to at least make an adequate and visible sign possible?

Traffic safety is a growing problem that will continue to grow as the area grows. Not all problems can be solved. (How many more must the city "nab" before it can add a second lane to that bridge? It does not require much steel and the city has its own source of the lumber.) A traditional democratic approach seems appropriate: the maximum good for the maximum number. In this case the city has abdicated its responsibility and yielded to the clamorous minority. It looks even worse because you live there. It also is worse because it takes the police from other duties that are important to enforce this speed trap and rip the innocent off. (No, I've not been one.)

By now you should be able to know whether this ugly business has been justified by any real benefits from it. If not it should be ended. If so the city should see to it that it stops creating innocent victims, particularly ^{victims and} the many good motorists who have a lifetime of habitually making that turn during the now-prohibited period, motorists who keep their eyes on the traffic. I think you owe us an explanation. Sincerely, Harold Weisberg
 CC: News-Post Harold Weisberg

Shookstown's turns

It is right and proper for citizens to petition for the redress of grievances as it is for public authority to consider such petitions to be met with unreasonable, unbalanced or unjustified gestures that amount to kowtowing to the loud minority at the cost of the majority.

This is what Frederick has done with the inadequately-marked prohibition of left turns on to Shookstown Road from Rosemont Avenue. It has solved nothing, it makes the city look ridiculous, it ignores more dangerous conditions on Shookstown Road and it is rapidly giving the city that solicits tourism the reputation of being a speed trap that discourages the tourism the city seeks to attract.

And in its enforcement the city is grossly unfair.

Traffic problems are characteristic of all growing areas and increased traffic on streets not designed to carry that traffic is certainly a safety concern. But there are greater dangers elsewhere on Shookstown Road, some can be relieved for a pittance and the city has resolutely refused to make these inexpensive efforts. For the past three years I have asked the city to paint a stripe along the edges of the road, especially where the county had stripes before the city took those sections over and obliterated the stripes when resurfacing. Each year it was acknowledged as necessary, promised if possible and promptly forgotten. This year the painting crews were in the area often, most recently in painting the new 20-mile limit on the road surface, but the inexpensive stripes marking the edges for the not uncommon bad weather, particularly fog, were not painted.

Over the years utility poles snapped off by autos have been a common sight, two within a few weeks after I spoke to the mayor about the real danger in poor visibility. There are utility poles not much more than a foot from the road surface and few that are as much as three feet away, a distance much smaller than the usual stoned shoulders. These are not accidents that people imagine, they are real and they are repeated and repeated. And they certainly can be serious if not fatal.

It is not uncommon to see autos driven off the road and mired in a muddy field at the intersection with Waverly Drive and that is a particularly dangerous area when there is fog. Three times after speaking to City Hall and when I was driving slowly and carefully I passed Waverly without being able to see the intersection because the fog was that dense.

The city grossed almost \$5,000 from its single speed trap. Is that not more than enough to at least make an adequate and visible sign possible?

HAROLD WEISBERG
Frederick

1/12/91