

# Private-property access: A reason for Old Mill delay

By John Tredrea  
Staff Writer

Mercer County wants to move ahead with a bridge replacement on Old Mill Road, having already spent \$175,000 on the project, said Julie Wilmot, spokesperson for county executive Brian Hughes.

Cause of the delay in the replacement project is a Kafka-esque regulatory situation involving multiple agencies at multiple levels of government.

Kafka-esque is an exaggeration, you say? Well, try this on for size.

"The delay," Ms. Wilmot said, is due the county's "seeking access to two private properties, so that a consultant can complete the archaeological survey the DEP (the state Department of Environmental Protection) directed the county to perform in order to obtain necessary permits in accordance with stormwater regulations.

"Mercer County has reached out to the State Historic Preservation office for guidance in how to move forward with a project in which private property owners forbid access for studies or surveys. Mercer County also is

of 100. "This is the lowest rated, non-historic, bridge under Mercer County's jurisdiction," Ms. Wilmot said.

The lowest rated historic bridge in Mercer County is the also-closed span over Jacob's Creek in western Hopewell Township. That bridge had a 3-ton weight limit.

The now-closed Old Mill Road bridge had a 4-ton weight limit.

Ms. Wilmot said the bridge-replacement project for Old Mill Road was awarded to Boswell Engineering in early 2001. In August 2002, during the initial permitting phase, the DEP requested that retaining walls be added to the project to minimize fill being placed in the flood plain. The walls were added and the project resubmitted to the DEP, she said. In July 2005, she continued, the DEP requested that the project be re-permitted to adhere to the new stormwater regulations. Changes were made to the permit package and the project was resubmitted.

On Aug. 31, 2009, Boswell received a letter from DEP requiring a complete Phase 1 Archaeological Survey. Richard Grubb & Asso-

# Old Mill closing issues aired

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About 15 residents of Old Mill Road and neighboring township thoroughfares, primarily Federal City Road, turned out for the Dec. 14 Hopewell Township Committee meeting to voice frustration and worry over the increased motor vehicle traffic and speeding they say has resulted from the road being

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closed to all but local traffic.

Mercer County closed the bridge on Old Mill Road several months ago, citing safety concerns. Since then, the road has been barricaded to all but local traffic at both ends. Along with other drivers, commuters, including those at Bristol-Myers Squibb on Pennington-Rocky Hill Road about three miles from the bridge, now have to take longer routes to get to and from their destinations.

The bridge crosses the brook a short distance north of Old Mill Road's T-intersection with Federal City Road and about two miles south of its T with Pennington-Rocky Hill Road. Old Mill Road is a township road, but the county has jurisdiction over the bridge, said Paul Pogorzelski, township administrator and engineer.

Saying he and many other residents had been upset to find the road closed one day, Old Mill Road resident Frank MacDougald asked, "Why weren't we notified? We're

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every upset we haven't been communicated with."

"We were advised by the county of the road being closed due to the bridge, and we did post notice of that on our Web site and cable channel," Mr. Pogorzelski said. "We did not send individual notices to residents."

The closing of Old Mill Road inevitably lengthens numerous vehicle trips by several miles. Residents of the area say many motorists are making up for lost time, some of it anyway, by driving faster than they used to.

"The traffic has been a problem" since the road was closed, said Bill McQuoid, who lives on Federal City Road just west of Old Mill Road. Mr. McQuoid said speeding has increased.

"The police have come" and issued summonses, but the problem persists, he said. A number of other residents made similar comments.

"Traffic has doubled" on Federal City Road since Old Mill Road was closed, said a man who lives on Federal City Road.

Mr. Pogorzelski said he

would contact B-MS about asking its employees to slow down. He said the township can do speed surveys, but added they are difficult to do this time of year because of snow and ice on the road. Material on the roads impedes speed survey equipment, he said.

Placed on roads, the equipment gives the speed of the vehicles that drive over it. The data can be used for policy decisions and as a basis for regulatory changes.

"We will try to get some

speed studies done," Mr. Pogorzelski said.

"This will be a frustrating process. Things will not happen quickly. I hope your frustration does not lead to anger," said Deputy Mayor John Murphy after all residents had their say.

Bridge issues are complex due to the involvement of several levels of government, the expense of the work involved, how long that work takes and the impact the work has on the area, said Mr. Murphy, echoing what officials have said.

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