

July 15, 2016 meeting of the Monroe County Highway Committee

Meeting called to order at 8:00 a.m., by Chairman James Schroeder.

Members present: James Schroeder, Mary Cook, Nodji VanWychen, and David Pierce.

Members absent: Paul Steele

Others present: Highway Commissioner – Jack Dittmar, County Administrator – Catherine Schmit, Office Manager – Becky Pitel, County Corporation Counsel – Andy Kaftan (Items VI. & VII. only), County Board Chairman – Cedric Schnitzler (Items I.-VII. only) and Monroe County Herald Reporter – Vicki Horstman.

- I. Period of Public Comment – None at this time.
- II. Motion to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2016 regular meeting made by Mary Cook, seconded by Nodji VanWychen. All ayes, motion carried.

III. Payroll presented as follows:

Check Date: 6/23/2016

• Field Personnel	\$63,114.46
• Administration	<u>\$12,338.40</u>
• Total	\$75,452.86

Check Date: 7/7/2016

• Field Personnel	\$64,416.98
• Administration	<u>\$12,522.08</u>
• Total	\$76,939.06

IV. Vouchers presented as follows:

• Early Pay	\$142,335.17
• Credit Cards	\$ 1,887.27
• Month Vouchers	<u>\$ 41,387.83</u>
	\$185,610.27

V. **Commissioner's Report (copy attached)**

• **Projects:**

- County crews: continued working on the CTH EW reconditioning project, replaced and/or extended three culverts on this summer's federal aided CTH B pavement replacement project, continued sealing cracks & rut filling highways that will be sealcoated this summer, performed miscellaneous drainage ditching & culvert replacements, removed the small old salt shed at the Cashton shop in preparation for the new diesel fuel tank, started mowing.
- State crews: continued mowing, repaired guardrail & fencing, and performed sign repair.
- County & State crews: cleaned up trees from a few wind storms.

****The Committee discussed damage to CTH N south of CTH A in the Town of Clifton caused by Mahlon Borntreger's sons hauling a large load of lumber with a horse drawn steel wheeled wagon during a very hot day. Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar feels that the sealcoat will mend itself especially with the recent very warm humid weather that required us to spread limestone chips on the highway to keep it from bleeding. Dittmar stated that he has spoken to Mr. Borntreger about the situation. Chairman Schroeder questioned if Mr. Borntreger should receive a bill for the damages. Jack did not feel that to be necessary at this time due to the minimal amount of permanent damages and Mr. Borntreger seemed sincere about preventing future damages & realizes that future damages will be billed to him.**

• **Equipment & Facilities:**

- Our 2016 tri-axle & single axle truck cab & chassis were delivered last week. Very soon, both truck will be going to low bidder Monroe Truck Equipment to have accessories installed.
- Our almost 30 year old Cashton shop underground fuel storage tank has been removed and its replacement with an aboveground storage tank should be completed shortly. This continues our cycle of only replacing diesel fuel tanks at our shops when tanks past their service life are replaced.

• **Budget:**

- Our 2015 Annual Financial Report will be reviewed at the July County Board meeting.

July 15, 2016 meeting of the Monroe County Highway Committee

- The May monthly budget analysis is attached. Due to the mild 2016 winter, our increased budget, and not having any major project expenses yet, we are about \$500k under budget based on historic averages of our 3 main accounts.
- Our cash balance is about \$100k under our 3 year historic average and about \$400k under our 10 year historic average percentages.

- **Personnel:** Nothing to report.

**** = added to report during meeting**

VI. Buggy Registration Fee

Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar stated that the reason for a buggy registration fee is simply lack of revenue for highway repair. Chairman Jim Schroeder stated that he has spoken to several Amish in regards to the possibility of a buggy registration fee. Schroeder found out that some of the Amish from the Ohio area are accustomed to paying a buggy registration fee which was around \$25 per year. Corporation Counsel Andy Kaftan stated that there was a bill on the state legislative docket back in 2006-2007 regarding a similar issue and it didn't go anywhere. Kaftan is not sure if the county could implement such a fee in just our county or if this has to be done at the state level. He has also done some state statute research and can find fee/license exemptions for semi-trailers not operated without a tractor and for some agricultural units. Kaftan cannot specifically find anything for buggies and feels that a buggy may be classified as a wagon because it is not motorized. Mary Cook disagreed with a buggy being a wagon, as it is their transportation. Corporation Counsel Andy Kaftan suggested reaching out to the Attorney General for a definition of a buggy and/or what a buggy is classified as according to the State of Wisconsin. Kaftan also questioned as to whom would be responsible for identifying all sources and what the cost comparison may be to the actual revenue from a buggy registration fee. Kaftan seems to feel that the registration fee will have to apply to every wagon. He also cautioned the Committee that the Amish community has a lot of backing across the nation for its religious freedoms. Mary Cook still feels that the buggy is not a wagon. Cook stated that there may be a better way of saving the county highways, such as requiring rubber instead of steel wheels. Kaftan feels that the statutes are broadly worded making it very tough to define. Chairman Schroeder is concerned that this could take 10 years to get something going in this direction, especially if it has to be approved through the State. Dave Pierce inquired if the county could create an ordinance requiring rubber wheels and banning steel wheels on the pavement. Chairman Schroeder feels that a lot of the cooperation on such an ordinance will depend on the Bishop. Andy Kaftan stated that if the county can prove that there is a safety issue, then the state cannot overlook it. The Committee took no action at this time.

VII. CTH Improvement Plan & Jurisdictional Transfer of Lowest Traffic CTHs (continued)

Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar stated that if we want to realistically keep up with needed improvements to all of our 344 CTH miles, our improvement plan boils down to needing more revenue or less expenditures by way of less CTH miles. Dittmar explained that we have 60-110 more CTH miles than any of our neighboring Counties. Mary Cook asked why the county just redid CTH B, when there are other highways in worse shape. Dittmar explained that there were federal funds available for this highway and the project is a simple pavement replacement consisting of just grinding up the existing blacktop and then repaving (equivalent to reshingling a house). Federal funding carries with it lots of red tape and has certain requirements which very few of our CTHs can actually meet unless we totally reconstruct the highway. Chairman Schroeder inquired to Highway Commissioner Dittmar how fast he thought the county would have to start grinding up highways and turning them back into gravel. He also inquired how many potential highways would be affected in the early stages. Dittmar stated that our improvements have to make highways last at least 25 years and right now we are only able to improve 4-5 miles a year. Dittmar stated that if base course isn't added to the majority of our CTHs that currently need improvement and we just put new pavement on the highway it will only add about 5-10 years of life to the highway (and then we will still need to add base course after the severely shortened life of this expensive new pavement). Dave Pierce inquired about transferring county highways to the local municipalities. Dittmar stated that we can't force a municipality to take over a CTH and also pointed out that a paved surface is not a state or federal requirement. Chairman Schroeder feels that the county has

July 15, 2016 meeting of the Monroe County Highway Committee

to stop talking about this issue and actually start doing something about it. Mary Cook feels that any taxpayer is going to feel that their highway surface should be as good as a highly traveled highway. The Committee inquired if there are presently any highways that need to be ground up just to improve the surface? Dittmar does not feel we have any highways that are to this point yet, but we will in the next 5 years if something doesn't change. Dave Pierce feels that grinding up a highway surface may be a wakeup call to county residents. Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar explained that the more the county spends on highway repair, the more the county will get back from state General Transportation Aids (GTA) based on our actual 6 year average expenditures. Chairman Schroeder feels that you cannot put any more tax burden on the landowners in Monroe County. Nodji VanWychen inquired if this issue should be presented at the upcoming Wisconsin Town's Association (WTA) Monroe County Unit meeting in August and the Wisconsin Counties Association transportation funding meeting to be held in September. County Board Chairman Cedric Schnitzler stated "it would be nice to have Monroe County be the light beacon of the 72 other counties, whom are having the same issues." Andy Kaftan stated that "the state is our boss, but if our boss is not giving us what we need, it may be time for a new boss." Kaftan cautioned the Committee to consider if this was the best time to grind up highways or if there would be a significant down side and what the repercussions may be. Kaftan would like to know prior to the Committee taking action on grinding up highway surfaces, as there will be complaints. Dittmar does not feel that there will be much of a financial downside to grinding up highways other than some additional maintenance in grading. Dittmar reaffirmed that the county does not get paid GTA off of highway miles. The county gets paid GTA off of actual expenditures (6 year average) regardless of mileage. Dittmar stated that he can present this issue at the August WTA Monroe County Unit meeting and explain to the towns that they may want to consider taking over certain CTHs. Chairman Schroeder, feels that the towns should be presented with a starting date for the potential highways that are being considered for grinding. Dittmar would like the Committee to set a certain criteria for the highway condition when a town takes over a CTH so we don't get into a situation where we are putting money into highways to turn over to certain towns and not others. County Administrator Cathy Schmit suggested bringing the "Just Fix It" resolution to the full county board. Administrator Schmit also suggested that the county could consider borrowing money to fix highways, but reminded the Committee that this does go on the tax roll. This option would get the repairs outside of the current state imposed levy limits. Administrator Schmit stated that bonding could also be taken to a referendum letting the taxpayers decide what they feel is best. Corporation Counsel Andy Kaftan feels that the State of Wisconsin is already aware of these funding concerns and that this is the State's way of forcing the locals to deal with the issue. The Committee decided to move next month's meeting to Thursday, August 18th to be able to review information provided by the Commissioner before presenting it at the WTA Monroe County Unit meeting that evening.

VIII. 2017 Draft Budget

Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar handed out a proposed draft budget for 2017, with a breakdown of proposed machinery purchases, proposed facility improvements and proposed county highway improvements. Dittmar started out by explaining that the CTH A hill project will not be as far along at the end of this year as anticipated when this year's budget was compiled about a year ago. That being said, the county will not be receiving the state revenues for this project this year either. The funds for this project will have to be carried over into next year's budget and the entire project is expected to be completed next year. The other proposed CTH improvements are the western ½ of CTH EW from STH 173 to Warrens and a small segment of CTH M around the proposed new bridge near Kettle Road. Reconditioning of this 0.3 mile segment of CTH M will complete the improvement of CTH M from Wilton to CTH A that has taken place over the last 8-9 years. The CTH Bridges budget line item is increased as there are two bridges getting built next year and 5 other bridges that were recently approved for federal replacement funding that will be designed next year. The department has plans to replace the underground fuel tank at the Wilton shop and some roof repair work on the newest addition to the Sparta shop. The overall draft budget operating levy is \$175k more than last year, mainly due to the CTH Bridges increases. The Committee inquired to the County Administrator if there is any extra funding for highways? Cathy responded that at this time there is no extra funding for highways. Chairman Schroeder inquired if the Sparta shop is actually big enough? Schroeder also addressed that the current lot really doesn't have much room for expansion. The Committee then reviewed the proposed machinery purchases for 2017. Commissioner Jack Dittmar explained to the Committee that the loader at the Tomah Shop should be replaced. It is presently 19 years old and the floor is rotting out. The department has been demonstrating new loaders on the CTH EW project. We have also been looking at some used equipment from the sand processing facility on Grosbeak Avenue. The proposed 2017 budget includes

July 15, 2016 meeting of the Monroe County Highway Committee

the purchase of a new sand screen plant and stacking conveyor. This sand plant has some of this equipment, but the Committee would have to approve a budget adjustment to purchase it this year. However, this would potential save the county a lot of money and/or cut down on new equipment expenditures next year. Nodji VanWychen feels that the saved money could be put into highways and that the operating levy needs to be raised on the proposed 2017 budget. The Committee directed the Commissioner to increase CTH Supplemental by approximately \$500k to include another approximate 1.5 miles of CTH improvements for 2017.

IX. Future Agenda Items

2017 final budget and CTH Improvement Plan & Jurisdictional Transfer of Lowest Traffic CTHs (continued).

X. 9:30 am – 1:00 pm – Highway Tour: Northeast corner of County

The Committee and Commissioner left for a highway tour at 10:30 a.m. of the following highways:

- ✓ CTH E (STH 21 to USH 12) – One of our lowest traveled CTHs with the southern approximate 10.5 miles in poor shape and the northern 2.1 miles in excellent shape as it was reconditioned in 2003 and sealcoated in 2012.
- ✓ CTH EW (USH 12 to I-94) – A short heavier traveled CTH that was reconditioned in 2012.
- ✓ CTH EW (I-94 to Warrens) – Another heavier traveled CTH in poor shape (1.5 miles).
- ✓ CTH EW (Warrens to STH 173) – An average traveled CTH of about 9 miles in length with the approximate western ½ proposed for reconditioning in next year's budget. The entire segment is in poor shape and the approximate eastern ½ is currently being reconditioned with completion scheduled before Cranfest at the end of September. The segment from Main Street to the eastern junction with CTH O isn't included in next summer's reconditioning as this segment is in an urban area of the Village with the surrounding lawns higher than the highway. Unless that segment includes urban improvements (curb & gutter, sidewalk, and storm sewer) to drain water off the highway, define the edges of the highway, and push the sidewalk back; new pavement isn't a wise investment of taxdollars. With all urban improvements, the local municipality would need to pay for the lion's share of those urban improvements.
- ✓ CTH EE (CTH EW to Juneau County Line) – One of our lowest traveled CTHs with the southern ¾ mile in okay shape and proposed to be transferred to Town of Scott ownership as part of a gentlemen's agreement the Town proposed if the County reconditioned CTH EW. The northern ½ mile is in poor shape and connects CTH HH to Juneau County's CTH EE.
- ✓ CTH G (STH 1713 to USH 12) – 5 miles of average traveled CTH in poor condition with sections of very narrow pavement.
- ✓ CTH ET (USH 12 to STH 21) – A 4.6 mile heavy traveled CTH in poor shape running through the City of Tomah and Towns of La Grange & Tomah. The eastern ½ mile has really developed into an urban area within the City over the last few decades and needs urban improvements (curb & gutter, sidewalk, and storm sewer) as well as a major improvement to the intersection with USH 12. The new Tomah School District property and soccer fields located on the north side of the highway just east of Gondola Road were discussed as probably needing some sidewalk or a walking path in the near future.

Total mileage of the above lower traveled CTHs is about 14 miles and highways in poor shape are about 27 miles.

Motion to adjourn at 12:55 p.m. by Jim Schroeder, seconded by Dave Pierce. All ayes, motion carried.