

October 27, 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, Paul Steele, Mary Cook, Nodji VanWychen and David Pierce.

Members absent:

Others present: Highway Commissioner – Jack Dittmar, County Administrator – Catherine Schmit (Items VII.-XI. only), Office Manager – Becky Pitel (Items I.-XI. only), and Personnel Director – Ken Kittleson (Items V.-XI. only).

I. Period of Public Comment – None at this time.

II. Motion to approve the minutes of the September ~~19~~¹⁶, 2016 regular meeting made by Paul Steele, seconded by David Pierce. All ayes, motion carried.

III. Payrolls presented as follows:

Check Date -	9/29/2016	10/13/2016	10/27/2016
Field Personnel -	\$74,510.14	\$70,823.13	\$67,324.04
Administration -	<u>\$12,246.49</u>	<u>\$12,123.64</u>	<u>\$19,475.44</u>
Total -	\$86,756.63	\$82,946.77	\$86,799.48

IV. Vouchers presented as follows:

Early Pay -	\$977,658.12
Credit Cards -	\$1,409.67
Months Vouchers -	<u>\$439,053.29</u>
	\$1,418,121.08

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

• **Projects:**

- County crews: performed section maintenance ditching & patching & shouldering and paved for the Town of Angelo.
- State crews: performed shoulder grading and maintenance ditching, finished cracksealing on the USH 12 PbM project, and finished this summer's bridge crack & deck sealing PbM project.
- County & State crews: performed shouldering on various STHs with recycled blacktop salvaged from recent STH paving projects, performed cracksealing and rut filling/pavement wedging on state highways.
- For just over a week five employees and one of our rubber tired excavators helped Vernon County dig out from the severe flood damage of the late September storms.

**Ms. Shirley Nauman's CTH CM speeding concern and petition (which she sent to all County Board members) was discussed. When Ms. Nauman talked with Commissioner Dittmar he explained that this is really an enforcement issue since the posted speed limit is currently 25 mph. The north half of this segment of CTH CM by the County Fairgrounds is in the City of Tomah and the south half is in the Town of Tomah, so both the City and County police should be involved. Jack also stated that from a traffic standpoint 25 mph is an unrealistically low speed limit on the outskirts of the City. We can't even get traffic to travel at 25 mph in the heart of the City within bocks & blocks of residential neighborhoods. Usually highways are posted at 45 mph or at the lowest 35 mph on the fringes of incorporated areas.

**The Winter Highway Conference will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, January 17 & 18, 2017. Jack would like to know which Committee members would like to attend as he needs to send in the registration by the end of November. Dave, Mary & Nodji said they will attend and Paul will get back with an answer.

**Jack has been in contact with the Village of Warrens regarding urban improvements (curb & gutter and storm sewer) on CTH EW (Grant St) from Main St to Francis St (CTH O north to Jackson County). Next summer's proposed CTH EW reconditioning project is planned to start at the CTH O intersection and continue easterly to end at this summer's project. CTH EW in the village (Grant St) needs urban improvements as most of the existing lawns are higher than the pavement with drainage running along the edge of the highway and some large trees just off the pavement. The Village looked into some DATCP funding for these urban improvements but weren't able to work anything out for next summer. So Grant St improvements will wait until the Village can come up with their share of costs.

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** Jack has also been working with the Village of Oakdale as we have CHIP funding to reconstruct CTH PP from USH 12 to I-94 with concrete. Currently there is no curb & gutter on the west side of this segment of CTH PP and the Village has agreed to pay for curb & gutter to be installed with our reconstruction work.

** Paul Steele inquired if anyone had contacted Gerke Excavating about cleaning out the USH 12 culvert by the VA Park in Tomah. Jack said no and he will check with the WDOT to see if they want this done.

- **Equipment & Facilities:**

- Our new 2016 tri-axle & single axle trucks are here after being outfitted by Monroe Truck Equipment.
- We hope to have bid openings at next meeting for budgeted fencing & security cameras.

** The County Zoning Administrator e-mailed to say they would like to expand the dog shelter towards STH 16 and asked for our input. Jack does not feel that this would affect our operations but the shelter workers will have more snow to hand shovel as we won't be able to plow straight across the front of the building anymore with it being expanded into a T shape. Jack does appreciate the courtesy of Alison and her Committee asking us about the expansion.

- **Budget:**

- The August monthly budget analysis is attached. Due to the mild 2016 winter, our increased budget, and still not having any major project expenses yet, very similar to last month we are about \$700k under budget based on historic averages of our 3 main accounts.
- Our cash balance is close historic average percentages and amounts.

- **Personnel:**

- Mechanic interviews were held late last week. ** Highway Commissioner Dittmar stated that as a result of those interviews we have promoted our Assistant Mechanic into this open Mechanic position. Paul Steele has concerns about the Department having a mechanic here at night by themselves. Jack expressed that it is huge benefit to have a night mechanic so work can be performed when equipment is not in use. The Department has had this position for well over two decades. Mr. Steele is concerned that if the night mechanic gets hurt, he may not be found for several hours.

- Our Patrol Superintendent gave his resignation notice at the end of September and last Friday was his last day of work. Only one current employee expressed interest in stepping up to this supervisory position so an advertisement was put in local papers with an application deadline of next Friday. ** Chairman Jim Schroeder commented and wanted to recognize Jon Pauley's resignation. He feels that there is a value in not having to watch over an employee. Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar stated that Jon Pauley left to take a job at Fort McCoy which offered better pay. Discussion arose that Jon Pauley's former Patrol Superintendent position has been reclassified to a higher pay grade. Jack stated that Jon's former position and the Highway Supervisor position had gotten classed in the same grade when the wage study was performed a few years ago. Chairman Schroeder is concerned that the other employees may not take to a new supervisor as he understood that Jon Pauley was well liked and respected by the guys.

** Our annual safety day is scheduled for Wednesday November 30th and the Committee is invited to attend any part of or the entire day. All employees will rotate through annual hearing tests and five to six different training sessions throughout the day. Jack asked the Committee if they have any objections to the Department providing a catered lunch for all employees as we have normally done this in the past. No one objected.

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

VI. *CTH BC Driveway Denial – Dean Muller*

Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar explained that Mr. Muller is considering purchasing a lot in a subdivision along CTH BC. Jack has denied a driveway permit to CTH BC as the lot also has frontage on a town road and the driveway should come off the town road which has a lower traffic count. Mr. Muller informed Jack that he wanted to appeal the denial of his driveway permit to the Committee. The Committee inquired as to why Mr. Muller was against having his driveway come off the town road. Jack explained that Mr. Muller stated it would be too long and not fit in with the type of house he planned to build. Since Mr. Mueller wasn't present, the Committee took no action.

VII. County Board Resolutions (copies attached)
Authorizing 2017 County Aid for Bridge or Culvert Construction and Repair Under WI Statutes Sections 82.08 & 61.48
Authorizing 2017 County Highway Bridge & Culvert Special Assessments Under WI Statute 83.03(2)

Commissioner Jack Dittmar presented the Committee with the proposed 2017 County Aid for Bridge or Culvert Construction and Repair Under WI Statutes Sections 82.08 & 61.48 resolution for the upcoming annual budget meeting. Requested county aid is about 25% above historic averages. **Motion made by Dave Pierce to approve the resolution for 2017 County Aid for Bridge or Culvert Construction and Repair Under WI Statutes Sections 82.08 & 61.48 for a total of \$187,508 with 50% County Aid of \$93,758, seconded by Mary Cook. All ayes, motion carried.**

Commissioner Jack Dittmar presented the Committee with the proposed 2017 County Bridge & Culvert Special Assessments Under WI Statute 83.03(2) resolution for the upcoming annual budget meeting. This is consistently around \$30k annually. **Motion made by David Pierce to approve the resolution for the 2017 County Highway Bridge & Culvert Special Assessments Under WI Statute 83.03(2) in the amount of \$32,029 to be paid by the towns and villages at tax time in 2017, seconded by Paul Steele. All ayes, motion carried.**

VIII. Private Driveway Paving Policy (copy attached)

Chairman Jim Schroeder stated that he would accept a motion to approve the private driveway paving policy. **Motion made by David Pierce to approve the private driveway paving policy, seconded by Jim Schroeder.** Chairman Schroeder stated that now that the policy has been approved and seconded this agenda item can now be opened up for discussion. Mary Cook stated that she disagrees with this policy and will not agree to do any private driveways. Chairman Schroeder stated that the reason he approved this policy is so it could be discussed and be modified as needed. Chairman Jim Schroeder requested that the Committee go through each of the policy points and have Jack explain his reasoning behind each point. Point one states, "the paving is replacing existing hard surfacing that is damaged/removed during a highway/road improvement/maintenance project". Highway Commissioner Dittmar stated that this just simply says if we damage it we have to fix it. Point two states "the paving is replacing an existing hard surfaced driveway that has to be relocated during a highway/road improvement/maintenance project". Jack cited CTH A as an example. This allows the Department to give a landowner whom had a hard surface driveway that now needs to be relocated due to the county highway reconstruction. Paul Steele feels that this should be a case by case basis. Jack feels that if the landowner has a hard surface driveway presently, the county has an obligation to give that landowner what they had as an equivalent. Administrator Cathy Schmit agrees, but no more than to just match up with the existing driveway. Point three states "the paving is a new hard surfaced driveway that was negotiated in conjunction with a highway/road improvement/maintenance project and approved by the Highway Committee". Paul Steele and Mary Cook feel this point should be struck from the policy. Jack explained that when we buy right-of-way, sometimes this is part of the negotiation and all negotiated purchases are ultimately approved by the Committee. Administrator Schmit questioned why this type of issue would not fall under Point One. Administrator Schmit is concerned and agrees with Mary Cook that this may need to be separated. Chairman Jim Schroeder would like something put into this point that states "under no circumstance of doing intergovernmental work would the county highway department be involved in private driveway or property improvement." Discussion arose as to whether or not the third point should be removed. Administrator Cathy Schmit feels that the third point needs to be reworded and likes Chairman Schroeder's recommendation. Chairman Schroeder requested that the policy be revised and brought back to next month's meeting.

IX. Private Driveway Maintenance & Repair AND Debris on Highways

Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar expressed that the main debris issue right now is field harvesting dragging mud onto the highways. Jack stated that currently County Dispatch is requesting the County Highway Department come out to clean up these issues as a quick fix to eliminate a safety concern. Jack stated that he has spoken to Dispatch Director Randy Williams and the County Sheriff regarding this matter and feels that it is the landowner's responsibility to clean it up. Dave Pierce

expressed that most landowners will not clean off the road after every load if they are hauling multiple loads. Mary Cook feels that the Amish should have to clean off the road after "every load" also. Jack would like to see a policy directing when the Department will clean up and when we will not clean-up highway debris. Private driveway maintenance & repair is also an issue that has arose lately with the severe rainfalls. Some landowners expect the Department to fix their driveway even when their negligent maintenance caused damage. In the past, for major widespread storm damage we have fixed all driveway damage on longer segments of highway. Jack would like to see this discussed and put into a policy adopted by the Committee.

X. Highway Department Wages (Paul Steele Analysis) – DISCUSSION ONLY

Paul Steele stated that he has a lot of time involved into trying to collect the information that he is going to present. The first sheet is a list of all of our present employees, which shows their name, job title, date of hire, current hourly rate and years/time of service. The second sheet is a comparable according to population and the county's process as to how they get their wage increases. This sheet also shows the starting pay and the top pay for the field employees only. Paul Steele stated that after studying some of the other counties, he feels that our present wage study has too many tiers. Personnel Director Ken Kittleson feels that there needs to be some difference in the compensation plan. Ken Kittleson stated that we have recently moved the Highway Foreman up a tier and separated him from the Equipment Operators. Paul Steele stated that the one thing that stood out to him when comparing to other counties, is that most of the highway departments have a step program instead of pay for performance. Mr. Steele also expressed that he is not a fan of the merit pay system and believes there is a learning curve. Mr. Steele explained that the City of Tomah for example, has a five year plan. Every year you get a bump and then an annual raise after the five years. Paul is very concerned with the fact that our department has changed the starting pay from \$17 per hour to \$17.50 per hour. He is not sure why we have guys that have been with our department for over a year that are making less money per hour than the employees we just hired a couple of months ago. Administrator Schmit inquired to Mr. Steele if he was sure that the person we hired this year doesn't have more experience that would have allowed the county to offer them more per hour. Ken Kittleson inquired to Highway Commissioner Dittmar if the county had not brought these employees up to the new starting rate of pay. Jack said no, not yet. A point was brought up that the low end of our wage study is \$2 per hour less than the other counties low end. Ken Kittleson reminded the Committee that the Highway Department never had a 5 year step plan, it was a 6 month raise and that's it. Mr. Kittleson also feels that the wage study offers more potential for pay than a step program. Discussion arose that under the union contract we used to get 100 plus applications, which set up a red flag that we may be overpaying. On the other hand, we only received three applications for the Mechanic position, which tells the HR Director that for this position we may not be paying enough. Paul Steele feels that government jobs use to be good jobs and that is why we received so many applications. Administrator Schmit stated that "we still have good jobs". Personnel Director Ken Kittleson stated that the Wisconsin Retirement System has changed and now offers employees the latitude to come and go. Paul feels that employees that have been here a long time have actually taken a pay cut. He would at minimum like to see the employees get bumped up to the current starting wage. Administrator Cathy Schmit reminded the Committee that the County Board pay for performance resolution will bring an employee up to the current market rate after 5 years. Chairman Schroeder feels that most of the employees have adapted to the pay for performance system and that the employee feelings about the system have changed for the positive. He also stressed that 2% may not seem like much but it has the potential to add up to more than a 5 step program that stops. He also feels that the new hire employees are willing to accept more than the older employees. On the other hand, Mr. Schroeder also feels that the younger generation people "want everything for nothing". He is concerned that the younger people need to learn to save their money and that our county is making people lazy. Jim recalled his struggles and persistence working 5+ jobs to make ends meet and how he and his wife now live on a fixed income of less than \$1k per month. Mary Cook inquired about the difference between a Section Leader and a Highway Helper. She is trying to understand why a person that has been with the county for 27 years is only making \$19.41 per hour. Nodji VanWychen commented that this year they could not get enough people to work the cranberry harvest. Paul Steele stated that not every employee actually gets a 2% raise. Ken Kittleson stated that the average county wide is 2% to 3 ½%. Administrator Schmit stated that the 2% budget for raises is right around \$320k county wide. Administrator Schmit feels that longer term employees really don't want to see new people making the same wage. Mr. Steele recognizes that if wages are going to be addressed further that it would need to go to the Personnel Committee and the full County Board. He wanted to discuss this to see where everyone's feelings were

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on this subject. Administrator Schmit stressed that when we hire people with experience, we can hire up to the grade's midpoint (100% of market). Dave Pierce stated that the county also has to balance with what the tax payers will accept. Paul Steele feels that we may have some employees not being treated fairly, especially when we have two people that are doing the same job and not getting the same pay. Paul is also concerned that the pay for performance structure will also take a person roughly 11 years to get up to the top level of pay. It was stated that the top level of pay is 20% more than the market. Chairman Jim Schroeder is more concerned that employees are not getting an honest review. Personnel Director Ken Kittleson explained that the Supervisor is the person that establishes the expectations of the job and they expect the employee to meet those expectations. Discussion arose about the county health insurance. Ken Kittleson stated that the employee pays 13% of the insurance and it has been this way since the 80s. Paul Steele inquired to Highway Commissioner Dittmar as to why he has a presence in employee evaluations when he (Mr. Dittmar) does not actually work with the employees on a daily basis. Steele inquired as to how he bases his opinions of employees. Dittmar responded by stating "that his opinions are based mainly off of the Supervisor's comments". Ken Kittleson stated that he only works alongside one employee yet he reviews all county performance evaluations and can send them back to the Supervisor if he feels they aren't reasonable. Administrator Schmit pointed out that sometimes you have an employee that goes above and beyond because of a project and that project may not exist next year. She feels that if you are doing your job you should at least get a rating of a "3", which means you meet expectations, in which you would receive a 2% raise. Paul Steele inquired as to how many employees have quit or left the highway department in the last year? Jack stated that we have turned over pretty close to half of the highway department employees in the last 4 years. Paul Steele is concerned that the employee turnover is more related to satisfaction issues and that the turnover is not just related to pay. Paul Steele inquired to Administrator Schmit as to why she feels that employees are leaving. Administrator Schmit stated that county-wide, we recognize that we have employees that are leaving because of Act 10 or they can't get along with their supervisor or a department head. She also stated that there are some issues that some managers tend to be more "micro-managing" and stressed that people do not like that style of management. Nodji VanWychen feels that there is a new atmosphere about getting along with people. Paul Steele inquired to Cathy Schmit "if we have departments where 90% of the employees do not respect their boss?" Ms. Schmit responded by stating "yes, but we are not going to get into that". Administrator Schmit stated that "we do not want to see a lot of turn over and it is expensive to lose that knowledge." She explained that it is a challenge if we have an employee causing problems and we have to recognize that if it potentially causes the county to lose 5-6 employees knowledge. Ms. Schmit followed with an example stating "if we lost Becky (Highway Department Office Manager) it would take 2 years to get someone up to speed just to learn the ins and outs of the office, the reporting requirements and laws within the department". Ms. Schmit is concerned if we have a group of employees that love their job and one person on a crew is bringing them all down. Ken Kittleson feels that it is very sad when we have people that love their job and detest coming to work every day. Paul Steele inquired to the group consensus of merit pay vs. step pay. Mary Cook is not in favor of merit pay. Dave Pierce does not feel that the merit pay has had enough time to evolve. Nodji VanWychen is not in favor of the merit pay system, but also agrees with Dave Pierce, meaning that it may need more time. Chairman Jim Schroeder stated "if we change the plan now, we are opening another can of worms." Paul Steele also inquired about the summer labor position. Steele stated that the Committee suggested that the position be paid at \$11 per hour, as we have had no applicants and he sees that the position is posted at \$10 per hour. Steele would like to know why this position is posted at \$10 per hour when the Committee was told that Administrator Schmit agreed to \$11 per hour. Administrator Schmit stated "that she doesn't want to be criticized for something where she is not sure if it came past her and would like to see it in print." Highway Commissioner Jack Dittmar stated that he spoke to Personnel Director Ken Kittleson and the position was approved at \$10 per hour. Mary Cook feels that next year the wage for this position should be \$12 per hour. Ken Kittleson addressed the Committee and stated that he would have a conversation with the Highway Commissioner and Administrator for next year. Mr. Kittleson also pointed out to the Committee that discussing pay issues is under the purview of the Administrative and Personnel Committee. Mr. Kittleson is concerned that Supervisor Steele may be serving as a "conduit" for personnel issues and advised that he may not want to do that. Paul Steele inquired as to where the employees should turn if they do not feel they are getting answers to their questions and concerns from their Supervisor, their Department Head, Personnel and the Administrator. Ken Kittleson reminded the Committee that they are not part of the chain of command when it comes to personnel issues. Mr. Kittleson stated that the employees do have the right to come to a County Board Member, but the board members should be funneling the employees to the appropriate party. Paul Steele stated that "he feels

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that the employees feel that they cannot go through the proper channels as things are getting covered up". Discussion ended with the Committee agreeing that the Personnel & Bargaining Committee and full County Board will have to take up these issues if they really feel they need to be addressed.

XI. Future Agenda Items

Private Driveway Paving Policy and Private Driveway Maintenance & Repair AND Debris on Highways policy. The Committee decided to move November's meeting to Monday, November 21, 2016 at 8 a.m.

XII. 10:00 am – 1:00 pm – Highway Tour: Southeast Corner of County

The Committee and Commissioner left for a highway tour at 10:50 a.m. of the following highways:

- ✓ CTH BC (STH 16 to STH 27) – One of our heavier traveled CTHs with the entire 7.7 miles in poor shape. Most of this highway was resurfaced in 1984 and then again in 1998 and sealcoated at least once since then. This highway is a good example of how just resurfacing over a highway that needs more major work only results in a pavement life of 10-12 years as this highway is still in poor condition and needs work again. Contrasting this highway with our highways that were reconditioned since 1999 and the vast majority of reconditioned highway pavements are all well over 15 years old and will last another 5-10 years before they will then only need to be ground up and resurfaced to result in another 20+ year pavement life.
- ✓ CTH A (STH 16 to CTH AA) – Crews were working on this summer's last reconditioning project which will complete the reconditioning of the entire length of CTH A from STH 16 to STH 131 over the past 20 years.
- ✓ CTH A (CTH AA to Ironwood Rd) – About 13 miles of one of our heavier traveled highways completely reconditioned over the last 20 years. Rut filling was performed in various spots over the last two summers and the entire segment sealcoated this summer. This maintenance work should provide another 5-10 years of pavement life before we have to think about grinding up and resurfacing segments that are 25+ years old.
- ✓ CTH A (Ironwood Rd to Irvine Rd) – About a one mile major reconstruction project with hill realignment that should be started next spring and possibly have our crews clear trees this winter if we don't have too much snow.
- ✓ CTH A (Irvine Rd to CTH N in Clifton) – 2014 & 2015 almost 5 mile major reconditioning project of a heavier traveled highway. The highway is in great shape.
- ✓ CTH N (CTH A to Kirkwood Rd) – 2013 & 2014 almost 2 mile test project (segment recommended by the Clifton Town Board) that just ground up the existing pavement, added a base stabilizer and single sealcoated in 2013 with another single sealcoat in 2014. Mary Cook pointed out horse & buggy damage in a few spots. Majority of the highway is in okay shape. The bridge in the middle of this segment needs an asphalt mat to eliminate a water pocket. The two bridges on each end of this segment are scheduled for replacement with federal funding in 2018 and design has just started.
- ✓ CTH N (Kirkwood Rd to CTH W) – About 5 miles of one of our lowest traveled highways in very poor shape. The weight restricted bridge near the south end of this segment is scheduled to be replaced next summer with federal funding. The replacement will be a twin cell concrete box culvert.
- ✓ CTH W (CTH N to STH 71) – About 2 miles of average traffic highway in poor shape. The bridge in Kendall is scheduled to be replaced with federal funds in 2019 and design has just started.

Total mileage of the above CTHs in poor shape is about 15.

Motion to adjourn at 1:06 p.m. by Nodji VanWychen, seconded by David Pierce. All ayes, motion carried.