



ROCK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Highways & Parks

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Public Works Committee Meeting – Highway

January 28, 2025 – 8:00 a.m.

Public Works Department – Committee Room

3715 Newville Road

Janesville, WI 53545

Call to Order: Chair Mawhinney called the meeting of the Public Works Committee to order at 8:00 a.m.

Committee Members Present: Supervisors Homan, Mawhinney, Pennycook, and Woodman

Committee Members Absent: Supervisor Sutter

Staff Members:

Duane Jorgenson	Public Works Director
Nick Elmer	Assistant Director Public Works
Amanda McElroy	Administrative Professional III

Others Present:

Chuck Flynn	Citizen (attended in person and on Zoom)
Terri Carlson	Corporation Counsel
Rick Ellis	Department of Public Works
Karl Fenrick	Department of Public Works
Neil Pierce	Department of Public Works
Kurt Bartlett	Town of Magnolia (Zoom)

Approval of Agenda: Supervisor Woodman moved approval of the agenda as presented, seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. ADOPTED.

Citizen Participation, Communications and Announcements: Karl Fenrick referenced the fatal interstate accident, shared concerns about compensation and upcoming changes to employee health insurance out of pocket costs and questioned what our staff's lives are worth.

Supervisor Mawhinney thanked staff for their work during last Wednesday's snowstorm despite being short staffed and asked what it would take to designate Public Works staff as first responders.

Mr. Jorgenson shared that the Federal Government recognizes Public Works as first responders, but the state is less clear. Mr. Jorgenson added the county could take the lead to designate Public

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Works staff as first responders and recommended gaining additional support from other counties through the Wisconsin County Highway Association (WCHA), along with writing resolutions.

Mr. Jorgenson shared several updates, including that old pictures and signs were put on display in the hallway, the parts room has been updated with new office furniture, and that the security camera project is currently underway.

REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

Discussion and Possible Action – ATV Route Application(s) – Town of Magnolia: Mr. Elmer shared that the Town of Magnolia submitted applications for CTH A, B, and M to be designated as ATV Routes within town jurisdiction. After looking at the recreational value, terrain involved, traffic density, and accident history, it was recommended to approve the segments of CTH A, B, and M, except for the intersections at CTH A/STH 213 and CTH B/STH 213. Both intersections have a higher accident history and are scheduled for intersection improvements in the future. ATV users would be able to use Townsend Rd to get across STH 213. Signs would be posted at Marsh Rd and Knutson Rd to warn ATV users that the upcoming intersections are closed to ATV traffic. Supervisor Woodman moved the ATV Route Applications (opening CTH A, B, and M, except for the two intersections at STH 213, which can be reconsidered once intersection improvements are made), seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. ADOPTED.

Discussion and Possible Action – ATV Route Application(s) – Town of Union: Mr. Elmer reminded the Committee that a portion of CTH M (north of USH 14) was already designated as an ATV Route in the Town of Union. CTH M (south of USH 14) was not included because of jurisdictional issues with the Town of Magnolia and the City of Evansville. Since the July 2024 Committee Meeting, Evansville has opened their roads to ATV traffic and the Town of Magnolia has requested CTH M to be designated as an ATV Route. Supervisor Woodman moved the ATV Route Application (approval of the segment of CTH M south of USH 14 in Union Township), seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. ADOPTED.

Discussion and Possible Action – Intergovernmental Agreement with Walworth County: Mr. Jorgenson shared a map and explained the jurisdictional boundaries between Rock and Walworth Counties. The intergovernmental agreement puts current practices on paper, with Rock County responsible for maintaining CTH M and Walworth County responsible for maintaining CTH C. The distances involved are similar with no bridges on either corridor. The contract has been through the review process with Corporation Counsel and Laserfiche. It does not need to go to the County Board because there is no monetary value. Supervisor Pennycook moved the Intergovernmental Agreement, seconded by Supervisor Homan. ADOPTED.

Discussion – Semi-Annual Report on Attendance at Conferences/Conventions: Mr. Jorgenson explained that every six months any training that is over \$1,000 must be reported to the Committee. During the last six months of 2024, one employee attended the FASTER three-day annual conference, and three employees completed CDL training at Blackhawk Technical College. A fourth employee resigned partway through CDL training.

Discussion – Quarterly Equipment Purchases Review: Mr. Elmer reviewed the 2024 4th quarter equipment purchases and explained the implications to the 2023 and 2024 budget cycles.

Discussion – WisDOT 2023/2024 Winter Report: Mr. Jorgenson gave an overview of the Annual Winter Maintenance Report for 2023/2024 (state roads only), sharing statistics and data for a statewide summary, southwest region summary, winter severity index, storms and incidents, brine usage by lane mile, direct liquid application, salt use per lane mile vs. 5-year average, winter cost per lane mile, response times, winter costs vs. 5-year average, cost per mile vs. severity index ranking, winter crashes, and salt brine usage. The full report is available on the Wisconsin Department of Transportation website.

Discussion – WCHA Conference Summary: Mr. Jorgenson gave a summary of the sessions, courses, and meetings that Mr. Elmer and himself attended at the WCHA 2025 Winter Road School on January 13-15. The WCHA is under new leadership and the conference was attended by over 60 commissioners. Topics covered included WisDOT projects, generational differences, ethics, pavement preservation, WCHA strategic planning, media relations, 6'-20' bridge program update, financial management/CHEMS, and LRIP pilot project review. In addition, Mr. Jorgenson attended the Bridge Committee Meeting, Safety & Training Committee, and WCHA Business Meeting, and Mr. Elmer attended the ACME Business Meeting.

Discussion – January 10th Incident: Mr. Jorgenson reviewed the incident that occurred on January 10, 2025, when a staff member plowing on the interstate was rear-ended by a semi, unfortunately resulting in the death of the semi driver. The staff member involved suffered bumps and bruises. This is the second time this employee has been hit by an at fault driver while working on the interstate. The dash camera video from the plow truck was shared, along with photos of the damage.

Mr. Jorgenson went over the department's response to the incident, including contacting the appropriate personnel, securing the scene, meeting the impacted driver at the hospital, having the driver available for interview by State Patrol, providing the driver with an EAP (Employee Assistance Program) contact, replacing the tires of the damaged truck to drive it back to the shop, having the driver meet with an EAP rep on site after the weekend, and having an all-staff meeting to discuss it further. Mr. Jorgenson highlighted the challenges and dangers staff face daily while doing their job as correctly and safely as possible.

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Discussion – Staff Update: Mr. Elmer shared that at the start of 2025, there were seven vacant highway positions and two vacant park positions. Five candidates with Class A CDLs were hired out of the most recent recruitment, two of them started on 1/6, one starts on 2/3, one starts on 2/17, and one hasn't confirmed a start date yet. This leaves two vacant highway positions and two vacant parks positions to fill. Mr. Elmer noted that the department is looking for candidates willing to learn if they lack experience. It can be challenging to get candidates scheduled for a physical, so the county is considering extending job offers contingent on the physical.

REVIEW OF PAYMENTS

December 2024 Payments: The Committee had no questions.

Next Meeting Date and Time:

Parks Meeting: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works.

Highway Meeting: Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works.

Adjournment: Supervisor Pennycook moved adjournment at 10:01 a.m., seconded by Supervisor Woodman. ADOPTED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda McElroy, Administrative Professional III