



ROCK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Highways & Parks

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Public Works Committee Meeting – Parks & Highway

Tuesday, December 9, 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, Sutter, and Woodman

Committee Members Absent: None.

<u>Staff Members:</u>	Duane Jorgenson	Public Works Director
	Nick Elmer	Assistant Director Public Works
	John Traynor	Park Services Supervisor
	Amy Friend	Parks Community Coordinator
	Amanda McElroy	Administrative Professional III

<u>Others Present:</u>	Matt Ehlers	Citizen
	Rick Ellis	Department of Public Works
	Kristin Vander Kooi	Financial Services (Zoom)
	Carl Lange	Friends of Rock County Parks
	Kris Ellis	Parks Advisory Board
	Dean Paynter	Parks Advisory Board (Zoom)
	Cathy Schneider	Parks Advisory Board/RRHPF

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

Approval of Minutes Dated October 28, 2025 HWY and November 11, 2025 PARKS/HWY: Supervisor Woodman moved approval of the minutes from October 28, 2025, and November 11, 2025, as presented, seconded by Supervisor Sutter. ADOPTED.

Citizen Participation, Communications and Announcements: Mr. Ellis suggested looking into ETF (Employee Trust Funds) for employee health insurance in 2027.

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Mr. Ellis shared that the current on-call staff member has only had 12 hours of sleep in the last 96 hours due to the ongoing winter weather conditions.

Supervisor Mawhinney thanked staff for getting the roads cleared.

Mr. Traynor shared that he provided the Committee with a final copy of the Rock County POROS Plan and Appendix.

Mr. Jorgenson reminded the Committee that the WCHA Winter Road School is January 13-15, 2026, in La Crosse.

Mr. Jorgenson shared a slideshow featuring photos and a video of the Department's Grinch themed parade entry in the Janesville Jolly Jingle lighted parade on December 6, 2025. The entry showcased the massive size of a 6X6 plow truck and was awarded "Best Use of Lights".

Mr. Jorgenson added that the Department had an All-Staff Meeting on Monday, December 8, to discuss the snowstorms last week. Lunch was provided to thank staff for their efforts.

Mr. Jorgenson noted the potential for ice this evening and added staff may be in earlier than usual to get ahead of it.

Parks Advisory Board Communications: Mr. Paynter shared that the Parks Crew is excellent this year. He thanked the Committee for their support of the parks and added that the Rock Trail Coalition is grateful to see the CTD D Peace Trail project moving forward.

PARKS BUSINESS

- A. Parks Year End Report 2025: Mr. Traynor and Ms. Friend shared a PowerPoint slideshow that highlighted parks information, donations, projects, grants, events, social media accounts, Friends Groups, and the future. Mr. Traynor and Ms. Friend thanked all involved for their generous support of Rock County Parks.

Parks General

- Staffing Update- fully staffed since April
- Park and Trail Information- horse trails (Gibbs Lake, Happy Hollow, and Magnolia Bluff), Magnolia Bluff gate/upper restrooms, Sportsman's Park restrooms, and Sugar River Park are all closed for the season, snowmobile trails are open

Rock County Parks 2025 - Year In Review

- Donations
 - Forever 34 Foundation- fishing poles

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- Friends of Beckman Mill- stocked Pond, painted the mill, donated memorial benches
 - Rock River Heritage Park Friends- Donated \$17,000 for a park master plan
 - Many more donations, it was a great year for donations
- Parks Advisory Committee
 - Thanked Tom Presney (27 years) and Floyd Finney (25 years) for their service
 - Welcomed Cathy Schneider and Kris Ellis
- Projects
 - 2026-2030 Rock County Parks Outdoor Recreation and Open Space (POROS) Plan
 - Beckman Mill- Thomas Kautz Boardwalk Addition
 - Carver-Roehl- replacement of Tree ID Signs by the Friends of Carver-Roehl
 - Crack filling projects at Turtle Creek Parkway, Sweet-Allyn, Carver-Roehl, Glacier River Trail
 - Magnolia Bluff- Trail rehabilitation project
 - Miller Farm Wetland Conservancy- parking lot addition
 - Rock River Heritage Park- Updated map, new signage, playground border, dirt work, seeding, completion of Randy Reilly Memorial Pavilion (need to plan dedication/commemoration event in 2026), United Way Day of Caring volunteer workday (September 10)
 - Sportsman's Park- deer shelter replaced after the fire
- Grants
 - Snowmobile Trail Aids Grants- awarded \$67,860 for 226.2 miles for both the 2024-2025 (awaiting reimbursement) and 2025-2026 seasons (received advance on December 5, 2025)
 - County Conservation Aids Grants- awarded \$3,500 in 2024 (closed), \$7,500 in 2025 (work completed, reimbursement requested), and applied for \$7,500 in 2026 (awaiting notification)
- Events
 - Searching for Owls/Winter Silent Hike (January 10)- Rock River Heritage Park
 - Candlelight Hikes- Magnolia Bluff (February 15) and Rock River Heritage Park (February 22)
 - Hearts in the Park (February 1-14)- Rock River Heritage Park
 - Leprechauns on the Loose (March 7-23)- six different parks
 - March Madness (March 26-April 1)- Magnolia Bluff was voted the winner
 - Egg Hunt & Eggs-ercise (April 7-21)- Carver-Roehl
 - Earth Day Trash Pick-Up Challenge (April 9-23)- all parks
 - Earth Day Guided Nature Walk (April 22)- Carver-Roehl
 - Solar System Trail- Ice Age Trail (April 24-May 4), Rock River Heritage Park (May 6-20), and Pelishek-Tiffany Nature Trail (October 14-31)
 - Green-Rock Audubon Society Birding Trip (May 31)- Rock River Heritage Park
 - Night Owl Hike (June 27)- Rock River Heritage Park

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- July Photo Challenge (July 1-31)
- Rock County 4-H Fair (July 22-27)- parks booth located under grandstand
- Rock County Parks Booth- Milton High School Job Fair (April 16), Rock County Family Fun Night (August 12), ABC Supply Health Expo (September 30), Rock County Benefit Fair (October 7)
- Fall Fun Challenge (September 22 – October 31)
- Unplug and Explore Challenge (November 16-30)
- 2025 Storywalk®- Seven Storywalks® at five different parks
- 2025 Wednesday Walks with ADRC- Carver-Roehl (May 7), Beckman Mill (May 14), Rock River Heritage Park (August 6 and October 8)
- The Elves are back for December- follow their adventures on social media
- Social Media
 - Facebook- started 2025 with 5,287 followers, currently have 6,865 followers
 - Instagram- started 2025 with 1,143 followers, currently have 1,169 followers
- Friends Groups
 - Friends of Beckman Mill- Opening Day, Ice Cream Social, Heritage Sunday, stocked fish in the pond, celebrated 35 years as a Friends Group
 - Friends of Carver-Roehl- Fall Fest, stocked Little Library, emptied trash, donated prizes for events and donated playground equipment
 - Friends of Rock County Parks- workdays at multiple parks, candle making, booth promoting the parks at events, Scoopie Night (December 1)
 - Ice Age Trail Alliance- Solar System Trail, maintained the Milton-Janesville segment, cleared trails at Gibbs Lake
 - Rock County Multi-Use Trail Group- tack swap, parked cars at Jefferson County Fair, camping fundraiser, trail workdays, replaced pump house at Gibbs Lake
 - Rock River Heritage Park Friends- donated \$17,000 to put towards a master plan of the park, volunteer workdays
 - Rock Trail Coalition- advocates for biking and hiking trails in Rock County, Pedal the Peace Trail, workdays/cleanup on Peace Trail, installed second arch
- Upcoming in 2026
 - Candlelight Hikes- February 21, 2026, at Carver-Roehl (6-8pm) and February 28, 2026, at Rock River Heritage Park (6-8pm)
 - Capital Improvement Projects- Sweet-Allyn shelter design
 - Rock River Heritage Park Master Plan- staff meeting on December 10, 2025

HIGHWAY BUSINESS

A. Review and Approval of Resolutions

1. Awarding CTH D Peace Trail Connector Design Project: Mr. Jorgenson explained that the resolution awards the \$131,000 design contract, which per the Intergovernmental Agreement, is to be split three ways between Rock County, the City of Beloit, and the

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Town of Beloit. Once the design process is complete, Federal Aid funding will be applied for to cover construction costs. Supervisor Woodman moved the Resolution, seconded by Supervisor Sutter. ADOPTED.

B. Review, Discussion and Possible Action

1. Discussion and Possible Action – Issue Paper – Access Control Driveway Permit – CTH N: Mr. Jorgenson explained that Mr. Ehlers is requesting a new field entrance on CTH N, which is access controlled, despite having an existing shared access driveway with the neighboring parcel. The shared access was established when a parcel was previously split, ownership has changed, and it is not known why each parcel wasn't originally granted a separate access point. The other property owner planted trees, which inhibit field access for Mr. Ehlers. There are no other options for Mr. Ehlers to access his field.

Mr. Jorgenson noted that per county ordinance, he must recommend the field entrance for denial, as there technically is access to the parcel and the proposed access will not meet distance requirements. Mr. Ehlers could apply for a variance, or the Committee could make an exception to the ordinance given the circumstances.

Mr. Ehlers added that the new access point would be safer, as it would provide easier access for large farm equipment and he wouldn't have to impede traffic.

Supervisor Sutter favored making an exception in this situation and left the meeting at 8:55 a.m. Supervisor Woodman moved to approve the field entrance, seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. ADOPTED.

2. Discussion and Possible Action - Consider Approval of 2026 Routine Maintenance Agreement (RMA) with the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation: Supervisor Homan moved the RMA, seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. Mr. Jorgenson explained that this is an annual contract with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to cover routine maintenance and winter efforts on state roads for the year. The 2026 RMA is just over \$4 million, a significant increase from the amount of \$3.26 million in 2025. ADOPTED.
3. Discussion – CTH J Project: Mr. Jorgenson stated that the CTH J Project, slated to be completed in 2026, is funded by a combination of State Aid (\$900K), and borrowing (\$1.8 million). If the County Board does not approve borrowing, the project will need to be delayed. Mr. Jorgenson shared a five-year plan detailing upcoming highway construction projects based on PASER ratings and discussed alternative options and the consequences of each choice. The county could incur significant financial ramifications due to rising materials, labor, and maintenance costs.

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Ms. Vander Kooi, Finance Director, noted that the currently slated 2026 highway construction projects include five miles of roads, which is well short of the standard nine miles of roads per year. She added that borrowing allows the cost of the road to be spread out to both current users and future users over time.

4. Discussion – Staff Update: Mr. Elmer shared that two candidates were hired after the last round of interviews in November and they start later this month. Currently, there is one vacant Heavy Equipment Operator position. The Highway Tech I – Pool position was approved by Human Resources and is currently posted online. This position is targeting experienced candidates that can work up to 20 hours per week to fill in when needed.

C. Review of Payments

1. November 2025 Payments: The Committee had no questions.

Next Meeting Date and Time

- A. Parks Meeting: Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 8:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works.
- B. Highway Meeting: Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 8:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works.

Adjournment: Supervisor Pennycook moved adjournment at 9:39 a.m., seconded by Supervisor Homan. ADOPTED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda McElroy, Administrative Professional III