

November 21, 2023 meeting of the Monroe County Highway Committee

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Meeting called to order at 9:00 am by Chairperson David Pierce.

Members present: David Pierce, Wally Habhegger, Nodji VanWychen, and Zach Zebell.

Members absent: Doug Rogalla

Others present: Highway Commissioner – David Ohnstad, Office Manager – Brooke Adams, and Kristine Tock for Public Comment.

2. Period of Public Comment

Kristine Tock (Cataract, WI), brought up concerns about the driveway at home she owns on CTH I. During road construction this summer asked if driveway would be put back the way it was, was told it would be put back in same or better condition. There was blacktop on the driveway prior to construction, was not in good shape, but was not gravel. When completed, gravel driveway was put in and it is already washing out. Would like something done to fix driveway other than the gravel.

David Pierce noted comments, requested the matter be placed on December meeting agenda.

3. Last Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2023 regular meeting made by Nodji VanWychen, seconded by Wally Habhegger. All ayes, motion carried.

4. Review Vouchers and Credit Card Charges (Discussion)

Highway Department vouchers and expenditures were reviewed. Month vouchers: \$631,056.80.

5. Invoice for Equipment Storage (Discussion & Decision)

Commissioner Ohnstad said when the CTH I improvement project began, he met with Town of Little Falls board members to look at removing a sidewalk that goes out to STH 27. The board members then requested the driveway for emergency services building be re-paved. Typically we would not facilitate that, nor would the contractor, however being that is a public use space we removed the old pavement and charged the town the contract cost of re-paving per the agreement with the town. The town responded to the invoice from the department by paying one-half of the amount and deducting the other half for “use of town resources”, for parking department equipment on the town’s property. Upon receipt of the town’s notice, Commissioner Ohnstad contacted Town of Little Falls’ chairman, Bryan Olson, who said he thought the town’s decision has merit. Commissioner Ohnstad recommended that we do not pay the invoice.

Motion to deny payment of the Invoice for Equipment Storage from the Town of Little Falls, made by Wally Habhegger, seconded by Nodji VanWychen. 3 Ayes, 1 Abstain (Zach Zebell), motion carried.

6. Legislative Initiatives (Discussion)

Commissioner Ohnstad placed on the agenda to open up further discussion relative to items discussed at legislative assembly, if needed.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that we did get a projection of the 2024 RMA with the DOT that shows no increase from 2023. A 5 year comparison was sent to the legislative team and Highway Committee. Over the last 5 years the RMA has increased less than 53%, while the Consumer Price Index has increased over 19%. This may require legislative initiative as they have the ability to re-appropriate funding within the budget.

November 27 is Snow Plow Driver Appreciation Day. One of the things done last year was a change in statute to allow for green emergency lighting on government snow plows. Testing shows that the green lights stand out.

We began incorporating the green lights last year. A news release is scheduled to go out to bring awareness to Snow Plow Driver Appreciation Day and will address how the green lights stand out to differentiate our crews.

David Pierce mentioned that the LRIP funding has not been increased in many years. Stated that funding needs to be looked at by legislators to update for current costs.

7. Commissioners Report (Discussion)

Commissioner Ohnstad provided a report

- Personnel update – we are now back to full strength. The last hire started last Monday, November 13th. At the same time, one of our most senior interstate operators just announced his retirement coming up in January. The retiree has been an outstanding employee and others follow his positive influence.
- The state salt shed project had received conditional approval to proceed with footings and foundation. The DSPS is asking for a sprinkler system and mechanical ventilation. Commissioner Ohnstad has been in contact with the division administrator to discuss. The issue is that the DSPS is applying code for an

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enclosed parking garage, which the salt shed is not. The issue has been brought to the attention of the DOT as this would affect every salt shed building throughout the state. We have been in contact with the City of Sparta Building Inspector and Fire Chief, and all will sign on to a variance request to have the building reclassified as a bulk storage facility. If the variance is not approved the conversation will be elevated appropriately.

- The storage building steel was delivered last week. The floor is completed and the in-floor heat and water extension was installed last week. Bids for electric service were opened this morning. The final site plan for gas was sent but did need a correction made. Hoping the shell will be up by the end of November, first part of December.

8. Future Agenda Items

Next meeting date scheduled for December 19, 2023 at 8:30 am (9:00 am if road trip not done) at the Highway Administration Building.

Next meeting to include Highway road trip in the southern portion of the county, weather permitting.

Motion to adjourn at 10:34 am by Zach Zebell, seconded by Nodji VanWycken. All ayes, motion carried.