

April 16, 2024 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 Habegger, Douglas Rogalla, and Zach Zebell.

Members absent: Nodji VanWychem

Others present: Highway Commissioner – David Ohnstad, Highway Operations Coordinator – Tyson Langrehr, Highway Office Manager – Brooke Adams, and BCD Services, LLC – Jack Dittmar

2. Period of Public Comment

Jack Dittmar with BCD Services, LLC requested to be recognized and allowed to speak during item number 7. Committee Chairperson, David Pierce, stated Mr. Dittmar would need to speak during public comment.

Jack Dittmar spoke, introducing himself as a former Highway Commissioner, and former bridge program manager for 18 years. He originally hired Jewell for bridge inspections in 2014. He and his son just started a small business doing bridge inspections. They are doing Jackson County and Trempealeau County bridge inspections. His proposal was almost \$6,000.00 less than Jewell's, and no one wants to give an exact reason as to why the county isn't taking his proposal. He was told by the commissioner that after doing a thorough review of proposals, the county chose the one best for the county. He was sent a copy of the Jewell proposal and is assuming the total cost was not looked at. The Jewell proposal gave a lot of window dressing, but the meat and potatoes of the proposals come down to 3 lines. Just in 2022 alone, Jewell charged an additional \$8,000.00, mostly on 2 bridges and 1 culvert. As a county taxpayer, he is concerned that Jewell doesn't do anything without charging for every thing. They charge mileage, \$350.00 and up just to get them into the county, and then they start the inspections and you get charged for that. The Town of Jefferson had to do additional inspections and it cost almost \$4,500.00. His proposal capped all additional costs at \$400.00 each. He is a keep it simple guy, kept his proposal simple and gave all the detail that was needed. His proposal had everything spelled out, while Jewell did not have the detail on what they were going to do, they basically regurgitated the DOT manual. He wanted to come and talk to the commissioner in person and had left a message. He did get an email the next day saying that the committee met and decided to offer the contract to Jewell. He did receive a copy of the proposal from Jewell. He doesn't care of the nickel and dime stuff and sadly the majority of that is paid by town money. Jewell charges almost 4 times the normal cost of inspections. Jewell was never the program manager when he was commissioner because he is qualified to do that, Jewell just did the hourly stuff. If they knew what they were doing, one of the simple things a program manager needs to do is notify the locals that they need to inspect their bridges every 2 years (state law) and tell them it is their responsibility. His understanding is that nothing went out to local municipalities prior to the RFP going out. He normally sent a notice out during his time as commissioner. It is common courtesy, ask the municipalities before you tell them you're going to do something. He is not happy, and no one wants to give a straight answer. If the department does not want to work with him, that's fine, but he is disappointed as a taxpayer. It doesn't seem that the department looked at the bid tabulation at all.

David Pierce said that the concerns were heard. Unable to respond during public comment.

3. Last Meeting Minutes (Discussion & Decision)

Motion to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2024 regular meeting made by Doug Rogalla, seconded by Wally Habegger. All ayes, motion carried.

4. Special Meeting Minutes (Discussion & Decision)

Motion to approve the minutes of the March 28, 2024 special meeting made by Wally Habegger, seconded by David Pierce. All ayes, motion carried.

5. Review Vouchers and Credit Card Charges (Discussion)

Highway Department vouchers and expenditures were reviewed. Month vouchers: \$726,456.17.

6. Code Talkers Memorial Highway (Discussion & Decision)

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that the DOT's response regarding signage for the WWII Code Talkers Memorial Highway was that those signs are typically not placed within the right of way. The response was forwarded to senators and representatives that sponsored the bill and suggested that the signs need to be in the right of way so they are visible, like had been done with the Purple Heart signs. He is hopeful that the senators and representatives will follow up on it.

No decision needed. Strike decision.

7. Confirmation of Selection (Discussion & Decision)

Commissioner Ohnstad provided an overview of the matter:

As was discussed at the consultant review committee, RFP's were issued to those listed on our current roster with current bridge inspection and program manager experience, as well as included on the DOT Roster of Eligible Engineering Consultants. Mr. Dittmar with BCD Services, LLC also requested to be sent the RFP, which we accommodated. Proposals were received from Jewell Associates Engineers, Inc. and BCD Services, LLC. As is shown in the minutes from the special meeting, Jewell Associates Engineers, Inc. was selected to be awarded the contract. The County Administrator and Corporation Council recommended that the Highway Committee confirm the review committee's recommendation and selections. The recommendation for the Bridge Inspection and Program Manager award was based upon, in no particular order, multiple certified inspectors available; detailed documentation of current training and experience of inspectors; recent, documented, experience in providing services to numerous Wisconsin counties, with references; detailed, documented approach to the project, as requested; proven, recent, notable service to Monroe County in the same capacity; listed on the WisDOT Roster of Eligible Engineering Consultants.

Doug Rogalla stated that it was his understanding that the BCD proposal didn't meet the requirements laid out in the RFP. Commissioner Ohnstad said that he wouldn't say BCD didn't meet the requirements, the committee found that the response from Jewell was in the better interests of the county.

David Pierce stated that the review committee did vote. Jewell was on the WisDOT roster.

Wally Habegger stated that he stands with the motion he made.

Tyson Langrehr confirmed that he stands with his second to the motion.

Motion to confirm the selection of Jewell Associates Engineers, Inc. for the Bridge Inspection and Program Manager award made by Doug Rogalla, seconded by Wally Habegger. All ayes, motion carried.

8. Summary Review of FY2023 Personnel Costs (Discussion)

Commissioner Ohnstad said that it has been discussed at length at the committee and elsewhere how overtime is applied. He thought it was important to put in perspective where those hours go. He provided a report from the CHEMS system, the department's baseline reporting system created by the DOT. The report shows a listing of all regular and overtime hours accumulated in the 2023 calendar year.

- The first grouping is county routine maintenance. The only anomaly is the county administration, which should have been split between the county and the state system where those costs would be reimbursable. A change has been implemented in the coding of hours, so the overtime hours will be reduced by at least half next year.
- The next grouping is county snow and ice control listed by section. Each section's overtime hours are similar. That time is necessary to respond to weather events.
- The next grouping is for County Trunk Highway Bridges, which is minimal for staff time. Bridge replacements are done by contract.
- The next grouping is for County Highway Supplemental Construction, the capital improvement projects. CTH W, CTH I, and CTH P have overtime costs for preparation work done on the projects. The preparation work is typically done on Fridays. If the preparation work was contracted out, we would not be able to afford the projects.
- The next section is for state general maintenance. The overtime hours, which include snow and ice, are reimbursable by the DOT.

Zach requested to go back to the county routine maintenance, which shows just over \$59,000.00 in overtime. He said from an outside perspective, routine maintenance should be done during normal working hours. Are people getting paid overtime to sweep shop floors? Commissioner Ohnstad responded, no. An example of overtime work would be that crews are working full time doing preparation work on capital projects. Oftentimes then, on Fridays if there aren't enough employees volunteering to work to create a crew able to preparation work, then they would do routine maintenance.

Wally asked if doing the work this way saves the cost of an additional full time employee. Commissioner Ohnstad said that if the overtime hours were equated with a new full time employee, the one additional person would not make a difference on projects, and when not working on projects the additional person would not be needed. It is more cost effective to pay the overtime as needed.

The review of the report continued.

- The next grouping is for state maintenance extras. They are separate agreements with the DOT in addition to routine maintenance. The costs are reimbursable by the DOT.

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- The next grouping is all response to accidents on state highways. The costs are reimbursable by the DOT.
- The next grouping is services provided to other county departments. The costs are reimbursable by the county departments.
- The next grouping is services provided to exterior customers, including local municipalities, other counties, and accidents on county roads. The costs are reimbursable by whomever incurred the costs.
- The next grouping is Local Bridge Aids. That is the statutory bridge assistance to local municipalities and is reimbursable.
- The next grouping is Supervision and General for the Operations Manager of the state system. Costs for the Operations Manager are 95% reimbursed by the DOT.
- The next grouping is for shop operations. The Fleet and Facilities Manager has a rotation of mechanics working on Fridays. When crews go out for weather events, the shop is staffed typically with two mechanics. It is highly productive to have the mechanics on staff during weather events rather than call them in when something breaks down.
- The next grouping is Acquisition of Capital Assets – Buildings. The hours worked were for the new salt shed and the new heated building site preparation.
- The next grouping is Material Handling, which is the salt and sand mixing. The crew hours are for mixing and putting the pile up. Material is sold to various towns and villages, so a portion of the costs are reimbursable, but it is mostly for county use.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that when you look at all of those groupings combined, subtract the reimbursable costs and those costs tied to winter or emergency response, the overtime number amounts to about 1% of personnel costs. The overtime is a large number, but when put into perspective it is not a notable amount. When the overtime used on capital projects is removed, the overtime number comes down to about 0.79%.

9. Corporation Yard Materials Stockpile (Discussion & Decision)

Commissioner Ohnstad that he does not want to diminish the issue. The notes sent to the committee were simply reporting what the issue is. The Highway Department has owned the property for 60-70 years. The sand pile has been in the same spot for decades. Moving the stockpile to another open location has no value to the department. If it becomes a county priority to move the pile, then the county should find the funds to relocate the pile.

Zach Zebell said that the concern is about the silica particles for the people working. He has been in construction for 18 years and silica dust didn't become a big deal until just a few years ago. Not the concern is up there with asbestos, lead, etc. The dog pound wants to move, but doesn't have the funding to do so.

Commissioner Ohnstad said that the pile is currently flattened. About 2 weeks a year crews are actively mixing, otherwise the pile is there for a few months. Long term, putting the pile in a covered building would be a solution, however the building would be \$800,000.00 or more.

Zach Zebell left the meeting at 10:31 am.

No decision needed. Strike decision. David Pierce requested the item be placed on the May Agenda as a Discussion Item.

10. Commissioners Report (Discussion)

- Commissioner Ohnstad said that municipalities will be notified of the new contract/agreement with Jewell Associates Engineers, Inc. for Bridge Inspection and Program Management for 2024-2025. The ultimate responsibility for bridges within the county falls to the Highway Commissioner. The state does not recognize bridge management below the county level.
- The public meeting in Cashton had around 12 people in attendance. We understand and fully respect that it is going to be an impact to the property owners. We will make fair offers and negotiate in good faith.

11. Future Agenda Items

David Pierce requested to call a special meeting to discuss the bridge management program for individual municipalities within the county. A tentative date of Wednesday, April 24th at 4:00 pm was discussed, to be confirmed after the County Board Organizational meeting the evening of 4/16.

Next meeting date scheduled for Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 9:00 am at the Highway Administration Building.

Motion to adjourn made by Wally Habegger, seconded by David Pierce. Meeting adjourned at 11:18 am.