

## April 24, 2024 meeting of the Monroe County Highway Committee

### 1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Meeting called to order at 4:00 pm by Chairperson David Pierce.

Members present: David Pierce, Wally Habegger, Jim Kuhn, Nodji VanWychen, and Zach Zebell

Others present: Highway Commissioner – David Ohnstad, Highway Operations Coordinator – Tyson Langrehr, Highway Office Manager – Brooke Adams, Corporation Counsel – Lisa Aldinger Hamblin (via phone), BCD Services, LLC – Jack Dittmar, and Monroe County Herald – Kyle Evans

### 2. Period of Public Comment

No public comment

### 3. Election of Officers (Discussion & Decision)

#### Chairman:

Wally Habegger nominated David Pierce as Chairman of the Committee, seconded by Nodji VanWychen.

There were no other nominees.

Motion to close nominations made by Wally Habegger, seconded by Nodji VanWychen.

**Vote was held, All Ayes. David Pierce elected as Chairman of the Committee.**

#### Vice Chairman:

Zach Zebell nominated Wally Habegger as Vice Chairman of the Committee, seconded by Nodji VanWychen.

There were no other nominees.

Motion to close nominations made by Jim Kuhn, seconded by Nodji VanWychen.

**Vote was held, All Ayes. Wally Habegger elected as Vice Chairman of the Committee.**

### 4. Bridge Program Administration (Discussion & Decision)

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that with the election of the new Bridge Program Manager, he has been notified that one of the local municipalities has chosen to engage in an unaffiliated inspector, which raises the question of the county's bridge program. The guidelines through the DOT manual are quite clear saying that ultimately, the Highway Commissioner is responsible for the program, including quality control, which we take quite seriously as does our current program manager. The DOT is quite clear in its expectations in section 1.2.5 of the DOT Structure Inspection Manual which states: In order to maintain the accuracy and consistency of structure inspections and structure inspection reports, inspection programs are required to have appropriate quality control and quality assurance measures. Typical quality control procedures will include a centralized qualification list for inspections, the online data management software for bridge information, and Quality Control Best Practices to provide a review or validation process. Furthermore, WisDOT BOS (Bureau of Structures), each region, and each county shall conduct quality control practices of their inspection program as outlined in this section.

Commissioner Ohnstad continued, stating that the county's current Bridge Program Manager has provided quality control as part of their contract with the county, which heretofore included all structures under the jurisdiction of local governments in the county (City, Village, and Town). The current value of the Bridge Program Manager contract is \$2,000.00 per cycle; however, this fee has been historically premised upon the fact that, again heretofore, the bridge inspection process and bridge inspectors have been under the direct supervision and control of the Bridge Program Manager or the Highway Commissioner. Importantly, the county's responsibility for providing quality control is not diminished in the event an inspector not affiliated with or under the direct supervision and control of the Bridge Program Manager or the Highway Commissioner conducts inspections on structures under county or local jurisdiction. It would not appear reasonable to compel the Bridge Program Manager to perform quality control for an unaffiliated inspector without commensurate compensation. In this event, he identified three potential options to provide quality control as required, and equitably assess the costs of providing such quality control.

Option 1: Do nothing; the county would assume the additional costs, and liability, for quality control in the event a local jurisdiction elects to engage an unaffiliated inspector.

Option 2: Compel all local jurisdictions to engage the county's contract bridge inspection firm.

Option 3: Permit local jurisdictions to engage an unaffiliated bridge inspector and assess the costs of providing quality control to those respective jurisdictions.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that he requested the county's Bridge Program Manager calculate the cost of providing quality control for bridge inspections conducted by an unaffiliated inspector under contract with a local jurisdiction. The fee would be \$36.25 per bridge inspected plus any additional fees that may be accrued in the performance of quality control activities.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that the option he recommends for the Committee's discussion and decision is option number 3.

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Jim Kuhn asked if the current quality control managers are the same individuals that have the inspectors.

Commissioner Ohnstad responded with, yes.

Jim Kuhn asked if the inspectors do their own quality control. Commissioner Ohnstad responded that the person that performs the quality control is part of the same company, but they are not actively engaged in doing the bridge inspection for the bridge they are doing quality control on.

Jim Kuhn asked, then it stands to reason that a single man operation would have difficulty providing the same type of service, correct? Commissioner Ohnstad responded with, yes.

David Pierce asked for clarification on which option is being recommended. Commissioner Ohnstad re-read the 3 options and re-stated that the department recommends option number 3.

**Motion to implement option 3, permit local jurisdictions to engage an unaffiliated bridge inspector and assess the costs of providing quality control to those respective jurisdictions, made by Wally Habegger, seconded by Zach Zebell.**

Zach Zebell asked to clarify, essentially any township not going with Jewell, we will take their inspection and do our own quality control through Jewell to make everything apples to apples. Commissioner Ohnstad responded with, yes.

Jack Dittmar requested to speak. David Pierce stated that Mr. Dittmar should have spoken during public comment. BCD Services, LLC is not on the roster of our bridge inspectors and the department hasn't done any work with them in the inspection part. Does he have anything else to add?

Jack Dittmar spoke, saying he was doing Trempealeau County inspections today, doing over 325, and they have no problem with him being a one man show. He is wondering what it means the quality control that someone else is going to do.

David Pierce asked Commissioner Ohnstad to go through the quality control section from the DOT manual again. Commissioner Ohnstad stated that it is laid out specifically in section 1.2.5 of the WisDOT Inspection Manual. It is quite long, but it is specific and quite comprehensive. We are held to that standard and would expect anything done under the County Bridge Program to meet that same criteria.

Lisa Aldinger Hamblin asked how the \$36.25 rate was determined, and what other additional fees would be.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that the current Bridge Program Manager estimates the quality control would take ¼ hour, at \$145.00 per hour. Additional fees would be unknown costs which could be: making sure the inspector has the proper credentials to inspect structures; sending reminders to complete inspections on time; any critical findings; answering any questions from the inspector and/or township; verification of any posting changes; special meetings for poor condition structures. It is not an exhaustive list, but those are examples.

Lisa Aldinger Hamblin asked if the additional items would be billed at the \$145.00 per hour. Commissioner Ohnstad responded with, yes.

Jim Kuhn asked if the jurisdictions would pay for the ¼ hour to start. Commissioner Ohnstad responded with, yes.

Zach Zebell stated that with townships using a different company, by passing the inspection on to the program manager, it makes sure that all inspections meet the same criteria. If one inspection is read and understood, then we will be able to understand them all. Believes that a constant is needed with all of the bridges.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that the quality assurance process through the DOT includes them selecting samples of projects that have been inspected through our bridge program. They meet on site and DOT inspectors go through and compare notes and critique, then issue a report. The DOT recommends a collaborative process for inspectors within a team.

With a motion on the floor, David Pierce asked if there was any other discussion. No further discussion. Vote was held.

**All Ayes. Motion passed.**

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that he will send a notice to jurisdictions informing them of the process and fee.

**Motion to adjourn made by Zach Zebell, seconded by Nodji VanWychen. Meeting adjourned at 4:19 pm.**