

September 17, 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, Jim Kuhn, Nodji VanWychen, and Zach Zebell
Others present: Highway Commissioner – David Ohnstad, Highway Operations Coordinator – Tyson Langrehr, Highway Office Manager – Brooke Adams, and Jack Dittmar

2. Period of Public Comment

No Public Comment

3. Last Meeting Minutes (Discussion & Decision)

Motion to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2024 regular meeting made by Zach Zebell, seconded by Nodji VanWychen. All ayes, motion carried.

4. Review Vouchers and Credit Card Charges (Discussion)

Highway Department vouchers and expenditures were reviewed. Month vouchers: \$544,949.14.

5. Budget Performance Report

Commissioner Ohnstad reviewed the most recent monthly budget report.

6. Amendment to 2025 Budget Proposal (Discussion & Decision)

Commissioner Ohnstad presented the amendments to the 2024 budget proposal. The right-of-way acquisition estimate for CTH PC was increased by \$125,000.00.

Motion to approve the amended Schedule of Obligations made by Wally Habegger, seconded by Zach Zebell. All ayes, motion carried.

7. Purchasing, RFP, Grant Administration (Discussion & Decision)

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that a draft resolution exempting the Highway Department from the proposed RFP and Grant Administration policies had been submitted to the committee in August. The final version of the Grant Administration Policy does exempt the department. The RFP policy exempts the department from administrative oversight. Based on the language of applicable statutes, Commissioner Ohnstad believes that the Highway Committee and the office of Highway Commissioner are exempt from the proposed county policies. It will be a committee decision to send forward a resolution, or not.

David Pierce stated that he believes a resolution should be moved forward. Commissioner Ohnstad stated that if so moved, the resolution draft will be forwarded to Corporation Counsel for review.

Zach Zebell stated that the policies were created after an issue arose with bidders on a non-highway county project. He believes the bidding process should be the same across all county departments. Mr. Zebell stated that he does not agree with lines 18-24 of the proposed resolution. He does agree that the Highway Department is its own entity outside of the county, but should follow the county rules and policies when building above ground structures.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that the Wisconsin Department of Administration vendor verification form is 3 pages. The state relies on the bonding company to determine whether or not a vendor would be responsible. If the basic application works for the state, it should work for the county.

Jim Kuhn advised the committee to look at the recent RFP for the Land Information office if they hadn't already read it. On the front page, there are about 3 lines that explain the scope of work, and the remaining 20 pages are a bunch of gobbledygook. A lot of the pages repeat information. The way the policy is written, the department head has to give control to the County Administrator's office and the committee of jurisdiction is simply the rubber stamp once the contract is ready for approval.

Zach Zebell stated that he thinks the RFP needs to be stronger, something more iron clad to protect the county. He believes RFP's should go through the committee of jurisdiction prior to being put out.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that for highway and bridge projects, vendors must be on the pre-certified DOT list. The DOT also has a debarred list. In his opinion, the department is exempt, period.

September 17, 2024 meeting of the Monroe County Highway Committee

Motion to move forward the resolution exempting the Highway Department from the RFP and Grant Administration Policies to Corporation Counsel for review made by Jim Kuhn, seconded by Wally Habegger. 4 Ayes, 1 No from Zach Zebell, motion carried.

8. Resolution on County Bridge Aid (Discussion & Decision)

Motion to approve the resolution authorizing County Aid for Bridge or Culvert Construction and repair under WI Statutes Sections 82.08 & 61.48 made by Zach Zebell, seconded by Jim Kuhn. All ayes, motion carried.

9. Resolution on Bridge Assessments (Discussion & Decision)

Motion to approve the resolution authorizing County Highway Bridge Special Assessments under WI Statute Section 83.03(2) made by Zach Zebell, seconded by Nodji VanWychen. All ayes, motion carried.

10. Short-Span Bridge Inspection (Discussion)

Tyson Langrehr provided an update on the short-span bridge inventory. All inventory information is sent to the department, and Tyson enters into the state system. As of now, he has completed 7 townships. He is waiting on information from the Town of Wellington and Town of Lincoln. He had requested sheets to be completed listing where short-span bridges are located in each municipality, but for some has had to drive through every town road to verify locations. He has inventoried 220 short-span bridges so far, and believes the outside contractor some municipalities have chosen has done around 80. When completed, he believes there will be around 350 short-span bridges in the county.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that a large part of the program is to inventory where the bridges are, and how many need to be repaired or replaced. He will be advocating to have programs for replacements and repairs go through the County Highway departments.

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that the inventory is to be followed by an assessment process, and he had advocated for a well-established consulting engineer to perform the assessments. Just as there is a WisDOT list of eligible contractors, there is also a list of eligible engineering consultants. Monroe County was put into a region along with 12 other counties in the western part of the state. An RFP was issued, and the decision to award a contract was made by a group including the Towns Association, Association of Counties, Municipal League, the Wisconsin DOT, and the Wisconsin County Highway Association. The southwest region received 6 proposals in response to the RFP. Out of those, 5 proposals were submitted by prime contractors listed on the WisDOT roster of eligible consultants. The project was awarded to the only proposal that was not on the roster of eligible engineering consultants, a pop-up firm consisting of recently retired highway commissioners. Commissioner Ohnstad stated that he is not questioning the integrity of those involved, but the appearance is inappropriate in his opinion. Tyson will complete inventory by the end of the year, and the assessments will need to be completed by the end of the following year. The county short-span structures will be inspected by the county's bridge vendor. A copy of all inspections for towns/villages/cities will be submitted to the department.

Jack Dittmar requested to speak on the matter. David Pierce allowed 2 minutes to speak.

Mr. Dittmar asked if the committee has ever looked at the WisDOT eligibility list. The committee is thinking of it as a report card, but nothing is in there about performance, maybe just financials. The list is there so the DOT can quickly get to a contract to start engineering services. Mr. Dittmar stated that he is part of the undesirable consultants that were awarded the contract. Mr. Dittmar stated that this was not a pop-up firm.

Supervisor Pierce responded emphatically that yes, it was a pop-up firm.

Mr. Dittmar continued, stating there is over 100 years of commissioner experience in their group and that experience is being dismissed. Right down the street from the Highway Department is one of the best contractors, but they are not on the eligibility list because they do not want to go through the red tape, but they have done work for the county and done good work.

Commissioner Ohnstad noted that this contractor is no longer in business.

Zach Zebell asked if a standard form will be used by inspectors, and how consistency will be verified.

Commissioner Ohnstad responded that the form will be reviewed by the department or the county's bridge vendor.

Nodji VanWychen asked if the town has opted for the county to do the inventory, will the town receive a report at the end of the year. Tyson Langrehr responded that yes, a report will be provided and it will be sent out as soon as possible.

September 17, 2024 meeting of the Monroe County Highway Committee

Commissioner Ohnstad stated that structures can still be added after the inventory time frame, but they would not be included in the first round of assessments. Once assessment have been completed, they will be collected and sent to the jurisdictions as well so they know what they have.

11. Commissioners Report (Discussion)

Commissioner Ohnstad provided a report.

- I-94 between CTH EW and CTH O, including on and off ramps at CTH EW - Attended a local officials involvement meeting for a proposed project on I-94 near Warrens. The Jackson County end of the project will be scheduled for spring 2029. The work on CTH EW underneath the interstate bridges and between the ramps is scheduled for spring 2030. The plans for the project will be done 2027-2028.
- CTH ET – the base course has been laid. Grading behind the curb, sidewalks, and some miscellaneous items still need to be completed. Hopeful it will be ready by the end of the month for striping and pavement markings.
- CTH BC – the projected completion date is now end of September. The contractor is working on the base course. The pipe work is complete, there are storm drain system parts to be put in yet. Once paved, pavement markings will be done and the project will get wrapped up. There was a 3-week delay in starting the project.
- ARIP applications are to be submitted by September 30th.
- CTH F – has been paved and pavement markings put down. There is landscaping to be completed on corners where alignment had been changed. The project turned out well.
- Chip seal project for CTH A and CTH T went well. Both sections were chip sealed and re-striped.
- Preparing the Corporation Yard ready for pavement in front of the new buildings.

Next meeting date scheduled for 9:00 am, Tuesday, October 15, 2024 the Highway Administration Building.

Motion to adjourn made by Zach Zebell, seconded by Jim Kuhn. Meeting adjourned at 10:24 am.