



MINUTES

Eau Claire County | Committee on Highway

Thursday, November 10, 2022 | 7:30 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting

Eau Claire County Highway Department - Room 101 and WebEx Virtual Teleconference

Committee Members Present: Chair Steve Chilson, Vice-Chair Nathan Otto, Larry Hoekstra, Judy Gatlin, Mark Beckfield

Staff/Others Present: Highway Commissioner Jon Johnson, Assistant Commissioner Brian Spilde, Operations Manager Chris Dahlby, Engineer Travis Pickering, Administrative Associate III Natalie Szews, Risk Manager Sonja Leenhouts, Fiscal Supervisor Kyle Welbes, Finance Director Norb Kirk, Corporation Counsel Sharon McIlquham

1. **Meeting called to order by Chairman Chilson at 7:30 a.m.**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Review/Approval of Past Committee Meeting Minutes (10/13/22) – Discussion/Action**
 - Supervisor Gatlin motioned to approve. Motion carried 5-0.
4. **Public Comment –None**
5. **Car Killed Dead Deer Removal – Discussion**
 - Reviewed dead deer removal process on state highways. The County notifies the state contractor to remove dead deer. If the state contractor cannot safely pick up dead deer, the County must move it to a safe spot so the contractor can come back to pick it up. If there's a safety concern, the County will move dead deer into the ditch.
 - The County moving dead deer for the state contractor to pick up is being charged to routine road maintenance when it should be charged through the state contractor. The State takes bids for contract to remove dead deer, and the County may want to take the deer removal contract instead, but it would cost about \$25,000 to do a good job.
 - Dead deer removal process on state highways can take a long time. It's at the contractor's discretion to determine if the dead deer are in a safe spot, so dead deer may be moved multiple times before they are picked up by the contractor. If this is the case, it can take 2-3 weeks for deer to get picked up by the contractor, but the County gets complaints.
 - There are also safety concerns due to contractor not being equipped with proper safety equipment.
 - Dead deer removal could possibly a DNR concern since they are responsible for deer. Previously the DNR was responsible for the dead deer removal contract, but dead deer were not getting picked up. WIDOT is responsible for removal contract.
 - On County highways, dead deer are removed from roadway and put in the ditch to decompose. In urbanized areas and in certain situations, dead deer are taken to another location to decompose.
6. **New Highway Facility Operational Efficiencies - Discussion**

- Trucks will be stored inside new facility. This will result in better vehicle inspections and faster response time since truck operators will not need to de-ice and remove snow from trucks sitting outside.
- New wash-bay will help extend life of trucks and reduce repair costs.
- Improved logistics and organization at new facility, and improved working environment for admin and fiscal staff.

7. Vehicle Registration Fee Funding Allocation – Discussion

- Reviewed Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF) Ordinance. VRF can only be used for highways and bridges for the Highway Department. State-registered vehicles are exempt from VRF.

8. Highway Report

• Highway Commissioner Update – Jon Johnson

- Winter Tech Talk – had an employee help present on brine process. Counties learned about brining process and the benefits of using brine and reducing salt usage. Possibly host this event at the new highway facility in the future.
- Discussed difficulties with hiring and retaining employees.
 - Every county is struggling to fill positions. New hires are not familiar with highway industry, and they need to get help with getting CDL and get trained on the job. Working on creating a contract agreement to have employees pay back CDL training if they leave before a certain amount of time.
 - Reduced efficiency due to training needed. Need to schedule jobs based on number of experienced employees, not the total number of employees due to lack of experience and training needs.
 - Exit interviews – Brian working with HR team on exit interviews and reasons for employees leaving.
 - Experienced staff is tied up with training, which can cause frustration and reduce efficiency. Have a meeting next week to go over operational priorities.
 - Looking into highway maintenance training programs for new employees.
- Wind damage to salt shed at new highway facility is going to cause a four-week delay.
- Public Involvement Meeting for CTH F/State St. project.
- Grant applications due in March for projects.

• Operations Update – Brian Spilde

- Done with construction season and getting trucks ready for first snowfall. Starting maintenance brushing. Will be brushing Town of Union area and future road project areas.
- Going through operational priorities and looking at training program.
- Mowing is completed. Will be looking at what areas need to be mowed after weed spraying for next year.

• Engineering Update – Travis Pickering

- Continuing to work on designs for 2023 projects.
- Large part of surveys for 2024 projects are completed.
- Bridge RFPs were sent out last week. Receiving good feedback on contracts.
- InQuik Bridging Systems bridge for CTH V is moving forward. Met with InQuik president and Ayres representative last week, and working on getting finalized quote and scope for project. This new bridge system could save about \$180,000 per bridge and it would take about a week to complete the bridge.

9. Review of Payment Vouchers (10/14/22 to 11/04/22) – Discussion /Action

- Fuel costs have increased and there could be a diesel fuel shortage.
- Supervisor Gatlin motioned to approve. Motion carried 5-0.

10. Future Meeting Dates/Times/Agenda Items

- Future agenda items:
 - InQuik Bridging Systems presentation
 - Spring Road Tour
- Next meeting: Thursday, December 8, 2022 at 7:30 a.m.

11. Adjourn at 8:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Natalie Szews

Natalie Szews, Administrative Associate III
Eau Claire County Highway Department

APPROVED 12.08.22