

WINNEBAGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - HIGHWAY COMMITTEE

DATE: May 23, 2023

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT: David Albrecht, Highway Committee Chairman
Chuck Farrey, Highway Committee Member
Ralph Harrison, Highway Committee Member
Donald Nussbaum, Highway Committee Member
Robert Doemel, Highway Commissioner

EXCUSED: Tom Egan, Highway Committee Member

ALSO
PRESENT: Paul Kaiser, Finance Director

Chairman Albrecht called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. A motion was made by Supervisor Farrey, seconded by Supervisor Harrison to approve the minutes from the April 17, 2023 meeting as written. Motion carried 4-0.

Chairman Albrecht asked for public input on the agenda items. There was none.

Commissioner Doemel stated that he would like to have the ability to purchase equipment for the Highway Department if it becomes available. For example, if a vendor states they have a truck that was not picked up by another customer, they typically allow only eight hours to make that purchase before someone else buys it. Currently, Winnebago County has no mechanism in place without going through all the normal purchasing channels to secure that truck in a timely fashion. A shortage of vehicles started several years ago during the pandemic. Vendors have cancelled placed orders, and surcharges added to existing orders. Supervisor Egan and Paul Kaiser have had conversations on how to create a system to make the purchasing process faster. Commissioner Doemel provided a list of the types of trucks needed by the department and the estimated costs for each. Paul Kaiser, Finance Director, stated that he would recommend a 12-month limit that the funds can be spent within. After that time, money could be allotted in the capital outlay budget. He stated that if this process moves forward, the purchase request would have to be approved and signed by himself and/or the county executive. It is hoped that after this year, purchasing will begin to revert back to pre-pandemic levels. After discussion, a motion was made by Supervisor Nussbaum to approve moving forward with the ability to purchase highway equipment based on availability. The motion was seconded by Chairman Albrecht and carried 4-0.

A budget amendment to purchase excavation equipment was discussed. Commissioner Doemel informed the committee that the 2023 Capital Equipment Budget contained the purchase of a Gradall for \$500,000. The bid came in at \$502,500 with an 8-12 month build time. After discussion with Highway Department staff, it was decided it would make more sense to instead purchase a tracked excavator, and one is available immediately. This type of machine has much more versatility and would increase county, town and state work that requires this type of equipment. Commissioner Doemel stated that because a tracked excavator needs to be trailered, it was determined the department can purchase the excavator, a semi-tractor and trailer to haul it, all under the \$500,000 that was originally budgeted in the Capital Outlay Budget. Commissioner Doemel stated that the additional trailer would be beneficial to the department for hauling other pieces of equipment as well. The current Gradall will be kept and used on an as-needed basis for specialty work or emergency situations. Supervisor Farrey stated he feels the department should instead purchase a Gradall and not a tracked excavator. A motion was made by Chairman Albrecht to move forward with the budget amendment to purchase the excavating equipment as presented today. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Nussbaum and carried 3-1. Supervisor Farrey voted no.

The increased cost of construction projects was discussed. Commissioner Doemel informed the committee that the CTH "P" project was estimated and approved in 2020 for 7.2 million dollars. This project was to be funded as a STP (Surface Transportation Program) Urban project at 80% Federal funding and 20% Local. The 20% local portion was to be split between Winnebago County, the Village of Fox Crossing and the City of Menasha. The project currently has 60% of the design phase complete. After the figures were rechecked, the cost has escalated to 9.2 million dollars. Due to the passing of the BIL (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law), an additional 2.7 million dollars have been approved for this project. The additional funds ensured that nothing had to be changed or cut out of the project, and returns the cost sharing to 80/20%. The project is scheduled for construction in 2025. Supervisor Farrey stated that state aids are becoming more available. He recommended the Highway Department get their list of projects prioritized to be ready to apply for them. Paul Kaiser stated it would be beneficial if Winnebago County had a grant person to review all available options.

The following were reported as general operations:

- All of the Highway Department employees participated in safety training sponsored by Wisconsin County Mutual Insurance Corp. Good topics and opportunities to learn were shared. The department will now get back on a yearly training schedule.
- Supervisor Farrey asked how the wage increases went. Commissioner Doemel stated that overall it was good. He stated that the department is now moving forward. A safety committee was added to address safety issues.
- Commissioner Doemel stated that there will be two Highway Operator 1 positions filled next week. That will make the department fully staffed with the exception of one mechanic. He stated they have been working with the HR Department to fill the seasonal positions. It's possible a couple employees could be hired as temporary employees.
- Tomorrow the paver will begin operating for the year. There is paver patching to do in some of the towns. Commissioner Doemel stated that the department has a lot of work scheduled for this year. June is the start of seal coating season. The department will again be traveling to other counties, including Door County. There are also paving projects scheduled for some of the towns and the county.
- Supervisor Farrey noted that the Winnebago County Highway Department crews do a good job on the concrete projects, better than some other counties. Commissioner Doemel agreed, and said recently representatives from the WisDOT commented how pleased they are with the concrete work.

The next meeting of the Highway Committee will be held on Monday, June 19, 2023.

A motion was made by Supervisor Farrey, seconded by Supervisor Nussbaum to adjourn. The motion carried 4.0. The meeting adjourned at 10:09 a.m.

Laura Spanbauer
Administrative Associate