

WINNEBAGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - HIGHWAY COMMITTEE

DATE: January 16, 2023

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

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

Chairman Albrecht called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. A motion was made by Supervisor Farrey, seconded by Supervisor Egan to approve the minutes from the November 28, 2022 meeting as written. Motion carried 5-0.

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

Commissioner Doemel reported that previously Highway Department vehicles used amber colored safety lights. He informed the committee that recent legislation allows municipalities the option to use fluorescent green warning lights instead of amber. These new lights have proven to be highly more visible. The green lights are restricted to municipal vehicles only, no private operators. Mr. Doemel said it is quite expensive to retrofit the existing fleet with the fluorescent green lights, but any new vehicles will be ordered with them. He stated that if the price comes down, the remainder of the fleet will be switched over.

The curve on Green Valley Road near CTH GG was discussed. Commissioner Doemel informed the committee members that the WisDOT representative that was scheduled to attend the meeting today could not make it. Supervisor Farrey opened the discussion by distributing hand-outs to the committee. They included a list of accident reports from the Sheriff's Department, including one fatality. He also provided the deeds showing that the property in question is owned by Winnebago County, and a map showing the local property owner who has been affected near this location one to two times per year. Supervisor Farrey stated that past accidents at this location have left possible hazardous materials behind, including motor oil, antifreeze, and other debris. Supervisor Farrey stated that the property owner at this location believes they may have a liability issue as they rent out their horse stable there. Supervisor Farrey stated he believes these items demonstrate the need to establish guardrail of some type to protect property and safety of drivers. Commissioner Doemel stated that according to the WisDOT, this location does not meet the standards for guardrail. He noted that these types of decisions are made following the MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices). This manual defines the national standards governing all traffic control devices, and keeps roads uniform throughout the country. Commissioner Doemel stated that this location was discussed at a recent Traffic Safety meeting, and that there were other contributing factors to the fatality mentioned. Supervisor Nussbaum questioned if the installation of arrows showing the curves could be installed. Chairman Albrecht agreed that putting up the arrow signs first may be an option. Commissioner Doemel stated that when this intersection was reconstructed, the WisDOT flattened the slope, eliminating the need for guardrail. He stated that at times guardrail itself can be a hazard, so there are ramifications and possibly liability to having it, especially when it is not warranted by the MUTCD. Mr. Doemel also stated that Green Valley Road is a town road, not a county highway. According to WISLR (Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads) the town received funding for Green Valley Road even though the deed looks like it's owned by Winnebago County. He also stated that the county cannot set a precedence by paying for town road maintenance for one town. Supervisor Farrey stated that the Town of Vinland will not pay for it because of the way it appears on the deed. After further discussion, it was suggested that a flashing light be installed on the curve. Commissioner Doemel stated that he does not have jurisdiction to install anything on state property, and that it is a safety issue to install anything in the road right of way. It was recommended that the WisDOT representative be invited to the next committee meeting to discuss this, and that it should be added to the agenda as possible action.

Speed limit requests on county highways was discussed. Commissioner Doemel asked if any of the committee members recalled what procedure was used in the past when requests were received to change speed limits on county highways. Mr. Doemel asked if the request should first be presented to the Traffic Safety Committee, then the Highway Committee. He inquired who should do the speed study, either to use the department's traffic counter, or pay someone to do it. Commissioner Doemel stated that he needs to have a procedure established so all municipalities are treated the same. He stated that his recommendation would be to follow the 85th-percentile rule, which sets the speeds at what 85% of the public is traveling at, and follow the speed study. Commissioner Doemel stated that he is reaching out to other counties to see what procedure they use for speed limit changes. Supervisor Egan suggested that each request should be reviewed separately by the Highway Committee, then referred to the Traffic Safety Committee if deemed necessary. The next Highway Committee meeting will contain action regarding the speed limits on CTH G and CTH M.

The 2023 Capital Improvement Projects were discussed. Commissioner Doemel presented the following list to the committee:

1. CTH F – Omro to CTH D mill and overlay
2. CTH II – USH 45 to north county line
3. CTH JJ – CTH CB to STH 76 mill and overlay. This will complete the corridor.
4. CTH P – Midway Rd. to STH 47 to complete the design work. Ayres will be making a presentation at the next committee meeting.
5. Highway Department building upgrades. Commissioner Doemel has been working with the Facilities director to get started on the proposals. He stated that this project will most likely be completed in phases. The #1 priority is removing the mold that is growing in the office. The HVAC system is obsolete.

The following were reported as general operations:

- Commissioner Doemel stated that three offer letters have been sent out for Equipment Operator 1 positions. The department is still down two employees, plus one long-time employee is retiring in February. Mr. Doemel stated that Human Resources has been very helpful lately, and he feels the hiring is going in the right direction.
- The county wage study should be completed soon. Administration is hopeful that it improves the morale issues.
- The Highway Department is purchasing a used roller from Door County. The department had rented it all summer, and they are applying the rental costs toward the purchase price.
- The purchase order for a P1 menu board will be going out soon. This will be installed in the breakroom and be beneficial in expediting the morning routine for employees.
- Supervisor Egan stated that he was asked if the department put up less snow fence this year. Commissioner Doemel stated that he will check into it.
- The problems purchasing trucks remains an issue. Commissioner Doemel stated that a letter was received from Ford stating they are limiting purchases to one vehicle. He would like to see a mechanism in place for the department to purchase a truck if one becomes available. Wading through the normal channels takes too long, and the trucks are sold. This item will be addressed at the next committee meeting.

The next meeting of the Highway Committee is scheduled for Monday, February 20, 2023.

A motion was made by Supervisor Nussbaum, seconded by Supervisor Farrey to adjourn. The motion carried 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.