

Highway Department Annual Report

The winter of 2007-2008 impacted the Town public works budget in many ways. Purchases of salt and sand were up due to increased usage from frequent storms. We realized a 25% overage in the road care materials line item as a result. Employee overtime was also stretched to the limit, as storms were so frequent that most of the employees worked nearly 40 days without a complete day off. Fuel usage was significantly higher as well. We consumed 30% percent more fuel than in a normal winter season.

I have been tracking winter maintenance costs for the last 2 years with a new computer program that we received for free from the University of New Hampshire. By keeping records of man hours plowing, tons of sand and salt used, it calculates the cost of every snow or ice event we have or respond to. The only cost not documented is the fuel usage or equipment wear and tear. Below is a comparison between 2007 and 2008:

	Labor Costs	Hired Equipment Costs	Sand/Salt Costs	Total
2007	\$22,827.00	\$1,120.00	\$30,275.00	\$54,222.00
2008	\$35,178.00	\$2,250.00	\$63,378.00	\$100,806.00

Lempster mountain road was the major project for the year. Most of the heavy excavation was completed in 2007, but we needed to haul the crushed gravel for the base course under the asphalt layer. We processed all the aggregate in the Town pit to make 2,500 tons of cold mix. All States Asphalt later paved the cold mix to a base depth of 3.5". With the base course completed on the entire 2-mile stretch of road, we intend to pave the 1" hot top wearing course in 2010.

Washington maintains approximately 12 miles of asphalt road. With the exception of 2 miles of Lempster Mountain Rd. and a 2-mile stretch of East Washington road, most of the tar roads have the original pavement on them. Some of the roads have not seen a new pavement overlay in 20 plus years. Shimming with the Town grader has been ongoing for years but with rising prices it is becoming more costly and expensive compared to paving an overlay.

As you well know, oil and gas prices have been very volatile in 2008. That has directly impacted the cost of asphalt road maintenance. AC Cement, the ingredient used to make hot top, has seen unprecedented increases. The price of AC cement has almost tripled in the last year. Fortunately, the high prices are forecasted to moderate in the winter and drop by next spring.

Although asphalt road maintenance has increased in cost, it is still cheaper long term to maintain a paved road than a gravel road with the same traffic volume. Lempster Mountain Rd., for example, after getting the wearing course will likely only need an oil seal at a 4 or 5-year interval for the next 15 years.

The Millpond watershed protection project in East Washington was designed this summer and approved by the Department of Environmental Services Wetlands Board for construction in the spring of 2009. Several local property owners have either started or completed their own mitigation and protection measures as outlined by the grant. More information and a copy of the grant project may be viewed on the Washington Conservation Commissions web page.

The Halfmoon Pond bridge reconstruction project went out to bid in December of 2008. The bid award and construction schedule will be decided in early January 2009. The project has been ongoing for several years and will require a final appropriation at Town Meeting to complete. We will know what the final appropriation will need to be in January.

Many of you have noticed the green 1-ton truck the department has purchased. It is a used Ford F-350 Superduty and was purchased with the plow for \$17,000.00 dollars. Budgeted funds were not used to buy the truck. It was purchased with FEMA reimbursement funds as a result of the floods in the spring of 2007. After the Town expenses were reimbursed as a result of the flood, the State and Federal government

reimbursed Washington for labor and equipment usage. The Ford truck replaces a 1984 Chevy 1-Ton that was purchased in 1998 from the Federal Surplus Property program. The Chevy truck was open for sealed bid invitation and was sold for \$1,900.00 dollars, all of which was put back into the Town General Fund.

We will be looking for an appropriation this year for the rehabilitation of the Washington Drive culvert located at the dam. This culvert is under the Town road and is the outlet for Island Pond. We propose to slip[line the existing culvert in place with a smooth polyethylene liner then pump high pressure grout (cement), into and around the voids of the liner. The slip lining process will significantly reduce construction costs and eliminate the need for a prolonged road closure or temporary bridge. Although the shoreline and wetland permit process is ongoing, we hope to get approval soon and construct the liner in 2009.

Although construction materials, fuel, utilities and other fixed costs continue to rise, you can be assured that we are trying our best to continue the level of service you require with as little impact as possible to you the tax payer. The Highway department budget has consistently increased by 2.5% a year. It closely follows the consumer price index. I believe this is a modest increase when compared to school and County budgets for which we seem to have little control over. A flat budget or zero increase would be desirable, however, with the rising costs we all see and feel, it does not seem possible without reducing maintenance objectives somewhere else.

I would like to thank the Selectmen, other departments, townspeople and most importantly the public works employees for their support. They are a dedicated group of people most of whom all live in Town and have a vested interest in doing what it takes to complete the job professionally and on time.

Respectfully Submitted,
Edward G. Thayer
Road Agent