

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROAD COMMITTEE OF THE NFLA**

A meeting of the Road Committee of the NFLA and Flathead County Road & Bridge Department (Road Department) personnel took place at the Road Department office, 1255 Willow Glen, Kalispell, Montana on January 21, 2009 at 10:05 a.m. Road Committee members present were Margaret Heaphy, Ed Heger, Steve Weber and Steve Berg. The agenda for the meeting is attached to these minutes. Road Department employees present were Dave Prunty and Guy Foy. The meeting ended at 11:50 a.m. The minutes for this meeting now follow:

### **Current Status of the Road**

- A. Road Maintenance has been reduced because the Road Department has reduced its personnel by 8½ full-time employees.
  - 1. The Department divides its attention between maintenance of a road and improvement of the road's infrastructure.
    - a. The Department establishes its budget based on expected maintenance needs in different areas of the county. These areas are referred to as "cost centers."
  - 2. Maintenance of the North Fork Road is not strictly scheduled, but is determined on an as-needed basis consistent with the maintenance needs of other roads, the availability of equipment and personnel, weather, and maintenance needs arising unexpectedly.
  - 3. For example, if the Flathead Valley floor and the North Fork Road receive significant snowfall, removal priority is given the valley floor. If the North Fork is one of the few areas receiving significant snowfall, the North Fork is the priority area for removal.
  - 4. In the summer, following any significant rain, the Department attempts to blade the road immediately. Water is essential for proper blading.
- B. The Department's telephone number for matters relating to snow removal is 758-5790. Calls are logged and appropriately responded to. Emergency calls should be directed to 911.

## Options

- A. On a 0 to 5 rating scale, a 5 defined as a new gravel road, the Department rates the North Fork Road as a 2 defined as a fair-to-poor gravel road; gravel crush is lacking or gone.
1. The Department believes that in the past 10-15 years, the county has placed more of its assets into paved roads at the expense of gravel roads, a situation that should be brought more into balance.
  2. There is currently no gravel source on the North Fork. The Forest Service has several pits in the area; the possibility of selling gravel from these sites to the county has been discussed.
  3. The road is in definite need of good gravel, but hauling the gravel from the valley is costly.
- B. Dust abatement, primarily Magnesium Chloride (Mag. Cl.) works well on a good gravel road; as the North Fork Road is not a good gravel road, it is not recommended as cost effective at this time.
1. Black oil also works well although the duration of its abatement quality is less than Mag. Cl.
    - a. Mag. Cl. reactivates following a rain because it leaves a residual on the road as it dissipates.
    - b. Mag. Cl. is cheaper per mile than black oil at summer 2008 oil prices. Mag. Cl. is estimated to cost \$3,500.00 per mile compared to \$4,000.00-\$8,000.00 per mile for black oil.
- C. The Road Department's desires to pave the nine miles to the Camas Road junction. This distance already has an excellent base, proper width and good drainage. The Department has so informed the Commissioners.
- a. The Department believes that if this distance was paved from a funding source other than county funds, maintenance responsibility would likely shift to the State Highway Department.
- D. Cost Share Program: The Department has proposed to the Commissioners a program by which the county will pay a qualified contractor to blade a small portion of a county road, and then apply black oil or Mag. Cl. adjacent to an applicant's property. A budget of \$100,000.00 has been suggested. The county's payment for this service would not exceed the cost of the county's

applying Mag. Cl. to the same area.

1. Should the Commissioners approve this program, the county hopes to begin the program during the summer of 2009 with public notice in February 2009.
- E. The county has considered dust abatement alternatives such as using a resin-based product known as Road Oyl, but is not satisfied they are superior to Mag. Cl. or black oil.
- F. A proposal to narrow the lower portion of the North Fork Road has been discussed without action.

#### **Decision Maker**

- A. The Department determines all matters related to general road maintenance. The Commissioners determine road sections to be rebuilt.
- B. There is no single commissioner tasked with Department functions. Each commissioner is assigned an area of the county under his/her supervision. The North Fork, in general, including the road, falls within the area supervised by Commissioner Dupont.
  1. This point will be clarified at a likely future meeting with Commissioner Dupont.

#### **Money**

- A. The \$40,000.00 savings in winter maintenance relates to a savings in the overall maintenance budget, not a savings in maintenance provided the North Fork Road.
  1. There is a disproportionate relationship between the small fraction of the county tax base represented by the North Fork area, and the relatively high fraction of the road maintenance dollar expended by the Department in the same area.
- B. Outsourcing dust abatement efforts is presently limited.
  1. Outsourcing dust suppression by spreading water on the road would not result in a savings to the county, and is ineffective.

#### **Unresolved Issues**

- A. The Commissioners requested the Department to submit a list of "shovel ready" (commence work within 120 days) projects anticipating federal

funding through stimulus legislation which, if available at all, would be distributed most likely through the state.

1. The Department believes paving nine miles of the road to Camas is "as shovel ready as a project can get." This project is on the Department's nonprioritized list of projects submitted to the Commissioners.

B. Present status of the DEQ suit against the county is as follows:

1. The county has three years to complete certain small projects to avoid payment of a fine.
2. Appointment of a dust deputy which has been done.
3. Erect signs regulating speed under dusty conditions which has also been done.
4. Commit \$10,000.00 to dust palliatives which has been done on Mennonite and Jensen Roads.

#### **Future Correspondence**

A. It was agreed that open communication would continue, that there would be additional meetings through the year, that minutes of the Road Committee meetings would be sent to the Department, and attendance at Interlocal meetings would continue.

1. The Road Committee's email address is northforkroad@live.com.