ONEIDA COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Oneida County Highway Department Conference Room
Thursday, May 28, 2026 8:00 a.m.

Committee members:	Present	Excused	Absent
Ted Cushing	X		
Bob Almekinder	X		
Billy Fried	X		
Dan Hess	X		
Greg Oettinger	X		

Also Present: Ben Rich/Highway Commissioner, Jeri Cooper/Highway, Dan Gleason/Highway and Mike Kortenhof/Public

1. **Call to order and Chairperson's announcements**
   Chair Ted Cushing called the Public Works Committee meeting to order at 8:00 am noting the meeting was properly posted and ADA accessible.

2. **Approve agenda**
   Motion by Oettinger/Hess to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

3. **Approve minutes of the Public Works Committee meeting held May 14, 2026**
   Motion by Fried/Almekinder to approve the minutes that were provided for the meeting on May 14, 2026. Motion carried.

4. **Public comments**
   Mike Kortenhof commented there was an Adopt a Highway sign on CTH A across from Poplar Drive that had spray paint on it for over a month that had not been taken down.

5. **Future Meeting Dates:**
   - June 11, 2026
   - June 25, 2026

6. **Approve Vendor Vouchers**
   Motion by Almekinder/Cushing to approve the vendor vouchers as presented. Motion carried.

7. **April Budget to Actual and Invoices Paid Reports**
   Rich reported general/winter maintenance would be over budget by an estimated $200,000 to $300,000 depending on the next winter season.
   Gleason commented the general maintenance continuing appropriation was shrinking year after year and would likely be depleted by the end of the year.
   Fried commented he felt Rich should notify the Administrative Coordinator so the executive committee would be made aware the department would eventually likely be looking for additional funding for that deficit.
   Rich noted the department was looking for additional work for other departments.

Fried commented they got off to a rough start the previous winter with the snow as well as the committee pushing the department to be more aggressive in regard to winter maintenance.
Rich confirmed the increased level of service resulted in more hours on the road and more materials used.
Fried commented there needed to be further discussion on the effect of the four-day workweek.

8. Staffing Update

Rich reported Jeri Cooper submitted her retirement date of August 3 noting the position would be posted internally adding one of the two vacant crew positions was posted. Rich explained they were planning to leave one of the positions open until winter to help with the anticipated budget deficit; however, they had only filled three of the eight approved summer LTE positions.
Fried recommended bringing the LTE wage schedule to the executive committee.
Gleason confirmed the year 1 LTE wage rate was $18.73, year 2 was $19.80 and year 3 was $21.40.
Fried recommended hiring for both open positions if there are two good candidates.

9. Sand Lake Boat Landing Launch Fee Program

Mike Kortenhof commented he did not understand why the County implemented the launch fee noting the Town of Sugar Camp was maintaining the landing up until the previous year. Kortenhof commented the current system was discriminatory has he did not know how to use that type of system on his phone, however, he would be willing to pay $5 cash.
Cushing explained he understood the Town was taking care of it but now it was the County's responsibility and changes were needed that would require funding.
Kortenhof commented there was no communication with the Town regarding the launch fee.
Fried explained a company was hired to handle the billing and enforcement of the launch fees.
Cushing noted the Town of Hazelhurst's launch fees are deposited into a box.
Kortenhof commented he would pay $5 cash into a box but he would not pay $10 nor would he pay by phone. Kortenhof commented he felt the Town would be willing to maintain the grounds but would not want to be responsible for repairs or improvements.
Hess suggested having corporation counsel draft a MOU that leaves ownership with the County with the Town continuing to maintain it. Hess recommended tabling the issue until the Town Chair could attend a meeting and talk to Tracy regarding corporation counsel drafting a MOU prior to meeting with the Town.

10. Request for Jurisdictional Transfer of Willow Road, Town of Lynne and Pine Lake Road and Squirrel Lake Road, Town of Minocqua to the Oneida County Highway System update

Rich reported there were many questions regarding the cost to the County related to the jurisdictional transfer so he started with developing round numbers that would be added to the Counts current maintenance budget. Rich explained there would be about a 17 percent increase, requiring about $250,000 for summer maintenance and about $120,000 for winter maintenance. Rich noted the towns would need to be paid for any maintenance performed by the towns so it would still be an expense. Rich commented he could not come up with a cost per mile for reconstruction of the road because if State or Federal funds are used it

must be designed and built to County standards. Those standards are a minimum of 11 foot lane width with 3 foot shoulders which gets into the environmental side since filling a swamp is frowned upon. Rich explained the STP that was approved for Lynne was only 1.2 miles at a projected cost of $4 million noting the almost 28 miles of road length. Rich confirmed the County GTA would not increase fully for five years until the additional expenses became part of the 5-year average costs.
Gleason explained even if spending increased exponentially beginning the following year it would take at least five years for the GTA to catch up so the County would be operating at a deficit. In addition to both towns losing the GTA funding for those roads, the $4 million of STP funding for construction might be lost if it could not be transferred to the County.
Gleason explained that even if the maintenance budget broke even for the current year the lack of any continuing appropriation funds would place the maintenance budget at a $300,000 deficit for the following year. Gleason noted the maintenance budget would need to increase from $800,000 to $1.1 million before adding $370,000 for the maintenance of the additional lane miles if transferred to the County.
Rich commented he would continue to get better numbers for the construction costs.
Almekinder acknowledged the road was within the district he represents and this was problem for the Town but he also represents the County. Almekinder commented the southern portion of Willow Road would be difficult to fix because it was built over a swamp.
Gleason noted Lynne had not applied for the Local Road Improvement Program funds since 2010 or 2011 so they would be at the top of the list for eligibility.
Almekinder explained 80 percent of the land in the town was either county or state owned and the town could not even afford to borrow the money for the matching funds. Almekinder noted there was a section of Pine Lake Road in Minocqua that was also on poor condition.
Rich commented the Town believed the wheel ruts were a safety issue noting if it was a county road, the first thing he would do is pave the wheel tracks.
Almekinder noted the Town discussed removing the blacktop and making it a gravel road or adding weight limits, which would kill the forestry industry.
Fried recommended bringing back harder numbers and meet with representatives of the Town prior to making a recommendation to the board.
Almekinder commented the big issue was the cost to fix the southern portion of Willow Road noting the projected cost of $4 million to reconstruct 1.2 miles.
Almekinder confirmed the Town might continue to receive a percentage of the timber sales if the County took over the road since other Town roads could be used for forestry.
Fried commented they should get firmer numbers and see if there was something they could do with the town.
Cushing suggested creating a document using bullet points outlining the issues they were facing.

11. Approve Tweet Garrot Proposal for Shop Safety Repairs

Rich reported the shop superintendent discovered one of the eyewash stations did not have water running to it explaining the water line supplying the station was in concrete and capped because it was leaking. Tweet Garrot proposed running new copper pipe up the wall and across the ceiling to reestablish the water supply. In addition, based upon the square footage of the shop OSHA standards require three eyewash stations and a shower so the quote included the cost to install a third eyewash station and a shower. Rich reported there were funds available in the buildings and grounds account to cover the cost of the project.
Hess suggested using pex instead of copper to reduce the cost.

Motion by Cushing/Hess to go with the Tweet Garrot quote on the eye stations and the shower in the amount of $19,800 with the question of when the work can be done and can pex be used instead of copper without advertising because it is an emergency. Motion carried.

12. Equipment Updates

Rich reported delivery of a new tandem patrol truck ordered in 2022 and the new commissioner truck was picked up.

13. Complaint Status Report

Rich reported they were working through the list as time allowed. Rich noted there were new complaints of damage to mailboxes as people returned for the summer and discovered their mailboxes were down. Rich explained mailboxes that were damaged resulting from contact with a plow are replaced using a temporary stand until being fixed in the spring.

14. Commissioner's Report

Rich reported work started on the CTH K project and the CTH E project was scheduled to begin on June 4. Rich commented they were working with the State to do more patching on STH 70 to address safety concerns. Rich reported on the County system they were repairing washouts when found and wedging the wheel tracks on CTH G. Rich commented the City had been working further out including picking weeds out the roundabout in an effort to beautify the City.

15. Future Agenda Items

- Jurisdictional transfer request update
- Sand Lake boat landing

16. Public comments

None

17. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:13 am

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Committee Chairman Committee Secretary