

ONEIDA COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Oneida County Highway Department Conference Room
Thursday, June 25, 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, Dan Gleason/Highway, Katie Bauknecht/Sugar Camp Town Chair 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 ADA accessible and posted according to Wisconsin Open Meeting Laws.

2. Approve agenda

Motion by Almekinder/Fried to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

3. Approve minutes of the Public Works Committee meeting held June 11, 2026

Motion by Hess/Almekinder to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

4. Public comments

None

5. Future Meeting Dates:

- July 9, 2026
- July 23, 2026 Fried noted he would not be present. Hess confirmed he would call in.
- August 6, 2026
- August 20, 2026

6. Approve Vendor Vouchers

Motion by Cushing/Hess to approve the vendor vouchers. Motion carried.

7. April Budget to Actual and Invoices Paid Reports

Rich noted they were working to cut corners to reduce the projected deficit.

8. Review of Winter Workweek Schedule Costs

Gleason explained the documents comparing the historical data from 4 years working a 5-day workweek to a 4-day workweek in the winter were essentially the same as previously presented in January but with the addition of complete data from 2026. Gleason commented his intent was to determine how much additional overtime and additional call pay result from a 4-day workweek.

Fried questioned why call pay was paid on a Friday if the crew was working a 5-day week.

Gleason explained if the crew was called in before their scheduled shift on a Friday they receive call pay.

Fried commented if an employee was called in on a Friday they would be working overtime if working a 4-day workweek.

Gleason reported the comparison was based strictly on winter maintenance hours noting the 4-year total average winter maintenance hours were for both the 5-day and 4-day schedules were almost identical. Gleason explained the 4-day workweek resulted in a 4 percent increase to overtime with a proportionate decrease to regular hours.

Hess commented he was not opposed to working four days; however, he would like to see flexibility in the scheduled workweek scheduling the crew Tuesday through Friday.

Rich noted they previously attempted manipulating the workweek but it did not work out.

Gleason explained he felt the finance director should vet his methodology used to compare and project costs. Gleason projected on average the total additional cost to working a 4-day workweek was about \$9,000; however, savings in mobilization costs of almost \$15,000 offset the additional cost. Gleason added it was difficult to quantify mobilization costs since it was an efficiency but at the very least, it appeared to breakeven.

Almekinder commented unhappy employees result in more turnover and the more employees that remain result in an efficiency to the County.

Cushing noted he was in favor of the 4-daywork week without the need for a flexible schedule.

Fried commented there would be challenges noting there was talk of six figures in difference noting Vilas County returned to a 5-day workweek.

Gleason commented that if employees bank the additional overtime as comp time, it allows those employees to take time off reducing labor costs to general maintenance.

9. Approve 2027 LTE Staffing Request and Wages

Rich explained by reducing the request for 2027 from eight to seven LTE's and increasing the wage by a grade level would result in a cost savings of approximately \$500.

Motion by Hess/Almekinder to approve the 2027 LTE Staffing Request and wages as presented. Motion carried.

10. Financial Specialist / Finance Technician Staffing Update and Request for Overlap Training

Rich reported Gleason accepted the Financial Specialist position effective August 4 and the Finance Technician was posted with a closing date of July 2. Rich explained since the State paid 80 percent of his wages for the first month and a-half there should be cost savings of about \$14,000 that could be used to pay for two weeks of overlap training at an estimated cost of \$3,500.

Fried commented he would prefer one week of overlap training.

Motion by Fried/Almekinder to approve the two-week request for overlap. Motion carried; Fried opposed.

11. 2026 Town Bridge Aid Update

Rich commented that if a town lists the full cost of a bridge replacement without accounting any additional funding, bridge aid would only reimburse half of the actual costs, which could result in a surplus in the account. Rich questioned if the committee would like to set an amount to establish as a cap.

Gleason reported there was approximately \$160,000 of unencumbered funds available for emergencies with over \$900,000 of approved bridge aid for towns noting the current policy approved six or seven years earlier states \$50,000 will be maintained for emergencies. Gleason explained the Town of Pelican underestimated the cost of replacement and the State would not pay the difference resulting in a cost to the Town of about \$155,000 and submitted an application for 2027. The project was scheduled be completed by the end of the current year and there was enough of a surplus to reimburse the Town in 2026 if requested even if levied for 2027.

Rich confirmed maintaining funding of \$100,000 for emergencies of be adequate.

Gleason commented he would make the updates to the policy as discussed and bring back for approval.

12. Line Item Transfer

Rich reported the transfer was to move \$10,000 previously discussed to a revenue account. Motion by Cushing/Hess to approve the line item transfer. Motion carried.

13. Sand Lake Boat Landing Launch Ordinance and Fee Schedule

Rich reported according to corporation counsel an ordinance was required to charge fees noting corporation counsel would need to draft the ordinance if the committee agreed.

Katie Bauknecht commented the town board did not make any official decision because they were waiting for options from this committee.

Rich noted that as of the previous meeting there was no direction to change the fee structure.

Gleason explained the original financial proposal based revenues at full capacity from April through November, which was unlikely. Gleason reported he created two updated estimates using more realistic usage numbers comparing revenues with both the original \$10 fee and a reduced \$5 fee. Gleason explained the original financial proposal estimated net revenue of approximately \$33,000 reduced to \$20,000 at \$10 and \$10,000 at \$5 noting they have not received any information on actual revenue to date. Gleason explained the County allocated \$10,000 for maintenance costs for 2026 noting approximately \$500 of costs to date.

Fried commented he would be open to discussing reducing the fee if the lower fee would meet the projected expenses.

Cushing recommended reducing the fee to \$5 and creating the ordinance with corporation counsel.

Bauknecht commented the DNR confirmed they would continue stocking the lake without making any improvements to the launch so long as the number of stalls was not reduced.

Bauknecht questioned if there was a plan considered for non-digital payment noting she felt the added cost associated with surveillance was a waste of resources.

Almekinder commented they were attempting to assess how to move forward with possible enforcement in the future.

Fried recommended eliminating the annual fee and creating the ordinance with only the \$5 launch fee.

Kortenhof requested the committee continue looking into installing a drop box for users that may not know how to use their phone to make an electronic payment.

Fried requested the commissioner to move forward with the \$5 fee and to look into a drop box option at the boat landing.

14. 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

Almekinder commented he delivered documentation from 1939 to Land Information. Cushing reported he spoke with Collin Driscoll who commented he could not believe the DOT approved this through road on a swamp noting Driscoll planned to work with the DOT for exceptions for the road.

15. Equipment Updates

Rich commented there were no major breakdowns and the shop was doing great keeping the equipment up and running.

16. Complaint Status Report

Rich reported the final complaint regarding potholes was for a road in Iron County. Rich noted the DOT maintenance coordinator visits the County every Tuesday to address complaints on the State system.

17. Commissioner's Report

Rich reported the Town of Woodboro requested quotes to perform maintenance on town roads so he submitted a proposal to the town board. Rich reported the Town would like to enter into a contract with the County to perform both summer and winter maintenance. Rich reported the chair confirmed the Town spends the majority of their \$140,000 GTA on maintenance of approximately 50 miles of road and should not require adding an employee. Cushing requested corporation counsel review the contract prior to bringing it back. Rich commented the construction projects on CTH E and CTH K turned out great and once shouldering was finished on CTH E the crew would move onto CTH K adding Lincoln County would be doing the painting. Rich reported there was about one day of work left on the USH 8 DMA route and seal. Rich explained the pavement on CTH L was sealed but not routed, as it was new pavement. Rich reported they were replacing the floor of the State salt shed in Minocqua because it was peeling up. Rich reported they filled one of the open positions and the second would remain open for an LTE who applied for the full time position.

18. Future Agenda Items

- 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
- Boat Landing Launch Fee Ordinance
- Town Bridge Aid Policy
- CIP Requests
- 2027 Town bridge aid requests
- Town of Woodboro Maintenance Contract
- Bonding Options for Road Construction

19. Public comments

None

20. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:37 am

Committee Chairman

Committee Secretary