ONEIDA COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS & SOLID WASTE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Oneida County Highway Department Conference Room
Thursday, November 20, 2025 8:00 a.m.

Committee members:	Present	Excused	Absent
Ted Cushing	X		
Bob Almekinder	X		
Billy Fried	X		
Dan Hess	X		
Robb Jensen	X		

Also Present: Alex Hegeman/Highway Commissioner, Lisa Bauknecht/Solid Waste Director, Dan Gleason/Highway, Nick Vos/WisDOT, Ed Phebus/Town of Cassian, Rod Randolph/Town of Cassian and James Rognstad/Kraus-Anderson

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

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

3. **Approve minutes of the Public Works & Solid Waste Committee meeting held November 6, 2025**
   Motion by Fried/Hess to approve the minutes provided from the November 6, 2025 meeting. Motion carried.

4. **Public comments**
   None

5. **Future Meeting Dates:**
   - December 4, 2025
   - December 18, 2025
   - January 8, 2026
   - January 22, 2026

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

7. **Budget to Actual Reports**
   Hegeman reported construction costs should come in well under budget; however, depending upon the weather, winter maintenance could be tight.
   Cushing noted the committee reviewed the reports.

8. Discussion with WisDOT Representative and Approval of 2026 Routine Maintenance Agreement

Nick Vos explained the 2026 RMA was increased by $71,000.
Fried questioned if the DOT was recognizing the increases to equipment costs.
Vos explained counties report the purchases and the use of the equipment to Machinery Management noting the biggest question was how to get the equipment on the road.
Hegeman explained Machinery Management determines the rates using a formula based on statewide averages but they need to work with Maintenance to figure a way to get those trucks on the road and used. Hegeman explained they purchase trucks for use on the state system; however, there was not much work for those trucks in the summer and the trucks sit in the winter without snow.
Almekinder commented if it does not snow the county pays for those trucks.
Vos explained since rates are set using a statewide average of hours they are competing with larger counties that do paving and a lot of other work with those trucks.
Cushing suggested using one average for northern and another for southern counties.
Hegeman commented since there were three surrounding counties that do their own paving it would need to be split up another way.
Vos noted he was open to bringing different ideas forward to increase the use of those trucks and loaders that do not get used a lot. Vos commented most importantly he needed the data demonstrating how that equipment was not making money noting Machinery Management was open to working with counties to make it cost effective.
Fried commented since the county operates without doing construction labor and equipment costs were getting to a point where it was not affordable and the county might not be able to continue maintaining the state roads.
Vos confirmed the state reimburses labor rates at whatever the county rates are.
Almekinder commented they were struggling to pay for trucks that now cost so much more noting if it does not snow, they still need trucks to cover the state routes.
Vos commented that counties statewide were not getting the hours during the winter so he would expect the reimbursement rates to adjust in the future.
Hegeman confirmed the rate for a tandem-axle increased by $10/hour for the next year.
Fried explained he was a member of the transit committee and the DOT funds the needs of the department for requests such as multiple vehicles and even buildings. Fried explained he would like the DOT to understand not all highway departments were equal adding he would like to see more support.
Vos explained they considered having counties truck salt to get hours in the summer but the vendor’s rate was favorable to the counties. Vos questioned why they could not make those numbers better for the DOT in order to get hours on the trucks.
Hegeman commented the department looked into the cost to truck the county salt but could not compete with the vendor.
Vos explained the total RMA amount was based on an estimate of what would be spent on the individual tasks within the county. Vos commented he would to see the entire 2026 RMA spent.
Motion by Almekinder/Hess to approve the 2026 Routine Maintenance Agreement. Motion carried.

9. Town of Cassian Highway Connection Proposal

Phebus explained with the addition of the round a bout and the construction on CTH K it was a good time to request the county take over Swamp Lake Road as a county road. Phebus commented Nokomis and Cassian would need to need to split the cost if the road was redone so they put together a proposal requesting the county consider taking it over as a county road. Phebus explained they wanted to get on record so in ten years when the road needs to be repaved it could be noted it was discussed.

Randolph explained the second part of the proposal was to eliminate current safety issues at the intersection of CTH L and USH 51 by extending CTH L to Swamp Lake Road.

Hegeman commented if the proposal receives support that they would likely see requests from the Town of Lynn and the Town of Minocqua. Hegeman noted if the county took over a road, he would expect the county would take over all maintenance and construction authority. Hegeman explained if the county took over from USH 8 to STH 70 it would require adding another route and likely an additional sand shed and questioned how those construction costs would fit into the 10-year road plan.

Randolph suggested the road could qualify for ARIP funding.

Hegeman noted the road would need to be properly classified to qualify for ARIP funding.

Almekinder questioned how many millions of dollars it would cost the county it took over both roads.

Fried requested Hegeman to bring back information to have a discussion related to the process of turning over a road to the county.

Almekinder commented Squirrel Lake Road and Pine Lake Road and Willow Road were the only connection from USH 8 to STH 70 noting the state already that admitted it would qualify for a county trunk road because they would not change the designation of that road.

10. Facility Space Needs Study Update

Rognstad provided an overview of process to date beginning with the Facility Condition Assessment, the 2015 Barrientos cost estimate update to current dollars, the RFP language for the electrical, drainage and fire suppression for the current facility, and currently the strategic facility plan for the future.

Rognstad reported the FCA revealed approximately $14 million in costs over 10 ten years to bring the current facility to a usable long-term solution but it does not take into account additional storage.

Rognstad explained the 2015 study included estimates for limited renovations for $2.8 million, extensive renovations for $6.3 million and a new facility for $7.3 million, however, those estimates did not include soft costs. Rognstad reported the updated estimates that include those soft costs were now $6.4 million for limited, $12.4 million for extensive and $17.5 million for a new facility.

Rognstad explained the targeted addition would add roughly $5.5 million in cost to the $14 million to the as-is update and a top end price for a full rebuild of roughly $22 to $25 million.

Fried noted money was being invested into the current facility and the priority was to see how the current facility could be renovated. Fried commented the question was asked if they were wasting money so they wanted to project future needs. Fried noted the intent of the renovations was to get another 20 years.

Rognstad explained they were using 50 years for a long-term solution unless a short-term solution was what was wanted.

Fried commented his first intention was to ask for the money to get the current facility in good shape and then identify adding new storage as they can afford it.
Rognstad explained the targeted addition along with to the costs to bring the building up to date would be that option noting they were providing the data so it can be determined in the future if it makes more sense to build new.
Almekinder commented there were many county projects and only so much money available noting in a perfect world a new facility makes sense but the county does not have the money.
Rognstad explained the next step would be to meet with the architect on either December 4th or the 18th to ensure the committee is part of the conversation on how to move forward.

11. Discussion on Administration Fee Charged to Other Entities

Hegeman reported all work performed by the department is charged an administration fee of 4.36 percent to help pay for administrative costs. Hegeman explained the DOT determines the annually using a statewide average.
Fried commented the Town of Minocqua was charged this fee in addition to the cost of the salt sand and questioned if the county could make municipalities exempt from that charge. Hegeman explained those costs would then be supplemented using tax dollars noting those costs are included as part of the price of materials purchased from contractors. Hegeman explained the rate charged was actually lower than the actual cost.

12. Equipment Updates

Hegeman commented for the next meeting he would like to have quotes for the mower tractor, the icebreaker, the router and the excavator brush head. Hegeman reported some vendors commented delivery of the tractor could take four or five months and the brush head and icebreaker could be used this winter.

13. Sale of Equipment: 140, 640, 740, 840, 940, 943, 343, 473

Hegeman reported truck 140, the attachments and an old salt conveyor would be auctioned. Motion by Fried/Cushing to approve agenda item 13, the sale of equipment identified on the agenda. Motion carried.

14. Complaint Status Report

Hegeman reported there were several complaints following the storm the previous Monday. Hegeman commented the three-quarters of an inch of snow likely cost the county $10,000 and the state $15 to $20,000.

15. Commissioner's Report

Hegeman reported the crew was working on mastic on short B and on the concrete south of CTH L on USH 51, a snowmobile trail reroute along USH 8 and removal of a retaining wall at Buck Lake for the forestry department.
Hegeman reported an operator at the Minocqua shop submitted their two-week notice.

16. Future agenda items

- Information related to the process of turning over a road to the county
- Meeting with Kraus-Anderson architect
- Equipment quotes

17. Discuss purchase of a Yard Jockey

Bauknecht reported the truck purchased in 2019 required some repairs but the department would not be able to function without it for four days while being repaired. Bauknecht explained the spare truck purchased earlier that spring burned-up the clutch because the trucks gross vehicle weight was not enough to pull the transfer trailer. Bauknecht commented she believed a truck capable of pulling the trailer could be purchased for approximately $20,000.

Motion by Fried/Jensen to approve the request to pursue a yard jockey not to exceed $25,000. Motion carried.

18. Closed Session - It is anticipated that a motion will be made, seconded, and approved by roll call vote to enter into closed session pursuant to Section 19.85(1) (c), Wisconsin Stats., "considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which this body has jurisdiction or responsibility" (Topic: Solid Waste Director Performance Evaluation). A roll call vote will be taken to go into closed session and it is anticipated that the Committee will return to open session by roll call vote to consider the remainder of the meeting agenda.

Motion by Hess/Almekinder to go into closed session. Jensen excused at 9:18 a.m. Roll call vote with all voting in the affirmative; motion carried at 9:18 a.m.

Fried excused at 9:29 a.m.

Motion by Hess/Almekinder to return to open session. Roll call vote with all voting in the affirmative; motion carried at 9:37 a.m.

19. Announcement of action taken in closed session, or take action based on closed session (NOTE: If the announcement of action taken in closed session would compromise the need for the closed session, the action taken will not be announced. Any action taken in closed session may be announced when the need for the closed session has passed).

Cushing announced the committee reviewed Solid Waste Director's performance evaluation. Motion by Hess/Almekinder to forward to the performance evaluation team. Motion carried.

20. Solid Waste Report

Bauknecht reported Merrill would accept the material on a trial basis but corporation counsel advised her not to move anything yet, however, continue to get prices for trucking. Bauknecht commented as part of the monthly update she informed the DNR that she was looking for trucking.

Bauknecht reported the loader operator discovered and extinguished a fire three weeks earlier. Bauknecht explained the fire department went over everything with thermal cameras and determined there was no further risk.

Bauknecht reported she found an e-cigarette battery that appeared to be the cause of the fire. Bauknecht commented the loader operator discovered another battery the next week so she contacted the hauler to address the problem. However, the loader operator found three more batteries in recycling so Bauknecht planned to contact the media to make a public announcement. Bauknecht suggested adding thermal cameras to the MERF building. Cushing directed Bauknecht get prices to bring back to the next meeting.

21. Future Agenda Items

- Compost update
- Thermal camera quotes

22. Public comments

None

23. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

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Committee Chairman Committee Secretary