

A REGULAR MEETING of the Board of Chippewa County Road Commissioners was held in their offices located at 3949 S. Mackinac Trail, Sault Ste. Marie, MI on February 29, 2024.

Chairman Gagnon called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M.

PRESENT: Chairman Gagnon, Commissioner Moser, Manager Laitinen, Office Manager Decker, Superintendent Erickson, Foreman Rye, Fleet Manager Donajkowski, Clerk Livermore.

ABSENT: Commissioner Sprague, Engineer Boileau, Clerk Christensen, Foreman Goodman, Chief Mechanic Marsh, Union President Cheney.

GUEST PRESENT: Cottage Road resident Chris St. Arnauld

Manager Laitinen requested a financial update be added to the agenda after the closed session.

MOTION by Commissioner Moser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to approve the agenda with the added item.

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION by Commissioner Moser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon that Payroll in the amount of \$211,260.42 and Vouchers in the amount of \$522,379.18 be approved and authorized for payment from the County Road Fund subject to audit.

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION by Commissioner Mosser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to approve the Regular Meeting minutes from February 15, 2024 and place them on file.

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chris St. Arnauld, a resident on Cottage Road, inquired about any possible drainage plans for Cottage Road. Manager Laitinen informed the board this area has been looked at and outlets need to be identified, noting the ROW is considerably narrow in this area, prohibiting much work from being undertaken. Discussion ensued.

STAFF REPORTS

Office Manager Decker

- Working on finishing year end.
- Working on equipment purchases with Fleet Manager Donajkowski

Superintendent Erickson

- Busy with some winter work. Crew is happy to see some snow and the overtime that comes with the work. Did what we could with the ice yesterday, but the wind prohibited using much sand and salt.
- Did some timber work, pulling logs from a pit and having them processed at the Amish mill.

Foreman Goodman

- No report.

Foreman Rye

- Same as Sault for winter work.
- Brush work and garage maintenance.

Engineer Boileau

- No report.

Clerk Christensen

- No report.

Union President Cheney

- No report.

Fleet Manager Donajkowski

- Sault garage lighting upgrade almost complete. Next week, the shop section of the garage will have the lights upgraded to LED. There are incentives from Cloverland that will be applied for regarding this upgrade.
- Finishing up an engine swap, garnering a spare truck for use next winter.

Payroll/H.R./Board Clerk Livermore

- Nothing new to report.

Chief Mechanic Marsh

- No report.

MANAGER'S REPORT

- Thank you to the crews and staff for making it possible to use some vacation time as well as attend a couple of conferences away from the office.
- Working with the Double Tree staff on the final details of the Legislative Dinner planned for during the Highway Conference. Senator McBroom and Representative Damoose are scheduled to be in attendance as well as Representative Markenen and MDOT representatives.
- Been attending meetings twice a week via Zoom with other UP County Managers regarding frost law weight restrictions. This

unusual winter and freeze thaw cycle has had restrictions imposed and then removed several times. As of now, permits are being issued as weather warrants.

- Wednesday, March 6, 2024, we will meet with the MDOT representative to discuss summer work plans and start dates. The state budget will allow for us to catch up on state reimbursement not utilized through winter operations this year. Work will include road side tree trimming and other various summer maintenance tasks to be identified.
- Our chipseal package is advertised and out for bid.
- Attended a heated discussion with MDOT regarding their imposed rules regarding historic preservation and the affects of their timing on approving our projects and the bid letting process.
- Attended Straits Area Council. CRA has announced changes to the by-laws.
- We are receiving some pushback on a new requirement imposing a cash bond be held for work in the right-of-way and refusing a surety bond. Spent time with legal counsel, ensuring we are compliant with applicable law. Surety bonds are too difficult to recover expenses from whereas the cash bond will be used to cover expenses incurred when the contractor does not follow all of the specifications of the permit. A formal policy for this will be developed and presented to the board for approval in an upcoming meeting.
- Working with Oxcart, the permitting software company, to incorporate ROW permitting functionality into the software platform.
- Update on the Eckerman garage. We are down two employees due to injury/illness and had one tender resignation at the beginning of February. Retiree, Brian Mills has agreed to take a seasonal temporary position to fill in until the State night work ends for the season.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Garage Door Construction quote - Manager Laitinen explained this work for two garage doors to be installed in the mechanics' bay in the Sault Garage went to bid twice with no bids being received either time. Dan Arbic has provided a quote for \$114,800 and agreed to the work. Manager Laitinen recommended accepting this quote and contracting Arbic for the work. Commissioner Moser inquired about purchasing policy and law. Manager Laitinen clarified the two failed bids are evidence of the project being let and that we can proceed in this fashion.

MOTION by Commissioner Moser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to accept the quote and award the work to Arbic Construction.

MOTION CARRIED

B. Huron Pines Independent Contractor Agreement - Huron Pines is a watershed agency from the Gaylord area monitoring tributaries emptying into Huron Lake. They have funding to replace crossings on Prentis Bay Road with an in-kind contribution from the Road Commission. Huron Pines would commit \$280,150 for construction costs to install three crossings, including a 20' bridge with a match of \$88K in in-kind work by the Road Commission.

MOTION by Commissioner Moser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to authorize Manager Laitinen to enter into agreement.

MOTION CARRIED

C. RESOLUTION 2024-10 MDOT Contract #24-5085 - removal and replacement of Box Culvert - Mackinac Trail over Charlotte River (Structure #1627)

MOTION by Commissioner Moser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to pass RESOLUTION 2024-10.

MOTION CARRIED by UNANAMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE

D. Annual Map Certification Signatures

MOTION by Commissioner MOSER **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to sign the annual Certification Maps.

MOTION CARRIED

OLD BUSINESS

- NONE

County Commissioners Comments

- NONE

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Superintendent Erickson added new hire Hutchinson has been a valued addition to the crew. He is conscientious and takes good care of the equipment.
- Chris St. Arnauld, as manager of Kinross Fab. & Machine Inc., invited Manager Laitinen or other staff to visit the shop and see what they can offer us.

ROAD COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Chairman Gagnon wished the crew "stay safe."

MOTION by Commissioner Moser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to enter closed session under MCL 15.268(1)(a) - Periodic Personnel Evaluation of public officer.

MOTION CARRIED by UNANAMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE

MOTION by Commissioner Moser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to re-enter open session.

MOTION CARRIED

Resumed open session at 8:58 a.m.
No decisions were made during the closed session meeting.

MOTION by Commissioner Moser **SECONDED** by Chairman Gagnon to adjust Manager Laitinen's compensation by 2%, effective with the start of this pay period, as a result of a favorable review and to match the staff increase in February.

MOTION CARRIED by UNANAMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE

Office Manager Decker reviewed the final budget for 2023 with the board, noting a late arriving invoice received in February from Payne and Dolan for \$371,000 for expenses that had to be recognized in 2023. This combined with a significant decrease in revenue from the state caused by the unseasonably warm and dry winter left 2023 with a large unexpected deficit that will reduce the Commissions overall fund balance.

The winter weather in January and February followed the same pattern as November and December and has significantly reduced projected Trunkline Revenue and as a result cash used for capital outlay in 2024 as well as other budget considerations. For 2024, the following recommendations were presented to the board:

- Holding off on the purchase of a skid steer and brush hog.
- Renting a new mower with a rent to own option instead of purchasing.
- Holding off on the new garage plans.
- Hold off on making any contributions to the OPEB trust for the first half of the year and re-evaluate the affect on fund balances as a result of summer work authorized by the state.

With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 A.M.

Bobbie Livermore
Clerk for the Board

Jeremy Gagnon
Chairman