

Cumberland County Public Works Directors' Association Meeting
September 14, 2011
9:00 a.m.

Present: Mike Shaw (Scarborough), Shawn Bennett (Pownal), Doug Fortier (Windham), Bob Malley (Cape Elizabeth), Eric Street (Yarmouth)

Staff/guests: Dennis Cox (Topsham), Eben Marsh (GPCOG), Retta Choate (GPCOG), Mary Ann Conroy (Old Orchard Beach), Myranda McGowan (SMRPC), Trevor Maxwell (Maxwell Media)

1. **Welcome** – Mike Shaw, Chairman

Mike Shaw opened the meeting at 9:05 A.M.

2. **Acceptance of Minutes from August 10, 2011**

Doug Fortier made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 10, 2011 Public Works Directors' meeting. Bob Malley seconded and all were in favor.

3. **National Public Works Week**

We have had ongoing discussions of how to better promote the Public Works departments as we do not do this well. The municipalities could hold open houses at each of their facilities or we could arrange for a regional event. Myranda McGowan was recently involved in a regional event involving four communities which was held at the Kittery Trading Post. She suggested holding a regional event on a Saturday to get more participants, particularly children. Mike Shaw said that Scarborough Public Works holds an open house every couple of years.

National Public Works Week is in the month of May which is not the most convenient time for public works directors to take this on. Eric Street said that last year he tried to get publicity without much response and found it frustrating to involve the right people and get the word out to advertisers. They advertised in the Portland Press Herald and did get some response. A good model to borrow from is the maple syrup weekend which advertises its interactive events. Eric called a program producer at Time Warner cable television about having panel discussions and interviews in order to get word out to the public. He also contacted Phil Harriman of Yarmouth who does a weekend cable show.

Last year Eric reached out to Tom Bell, a reporter for the Portland Press Herald. Tom suggested that Eric contact Trevor Maxwell of Maxwell Media and formerly of the Portland Press Herald. Eric introduced Trevor who has offered to share some tips on getting media coverage. He will give us some feedback and get our input on what we want to see and the challenges we face.

Trevor suggested we decide on a message such as a focus on services, employees or something else. The goal is to increase visibility and appreciation for public works by creating a clear message about what we do and why it is important. The message can be backed up with statistics and personal stories. Some weekly newspapers such as the Cape Courier will print press releases as written. You can find someone to write the stories for the newspapers or persuade newspaper staff to write the story.

Last year's theme was 'serving the community'. We need to come up with a story or message that is compelling enough to get media attention. Keep in mind that there are fewer reporters available due to budget cutbacks. Cabela's in Scarborough and also the Kittery Trading Post may work well for regional events. We cannot hold it inside the Maine Mall because we do not meet the insurance requirements.

Myranda suggested partnering with *Commute Another Way Week* but Trevor felt that we should keep the event separate. We want to recognize people behind the scenes and why their work matters, particularly those who have gone above and beyond the call of duty.

Trevor noted that we cannot control the news of the day and something more newsworthy could happen to prevent our story from getting covered. If we send the story to the media with enough lead time then hopefully nothing will interfere with the coverage of our event.

Trevor distributed a handout with the following tips on getting media coverage:

- Visuals are important! The equipment expo should be aimed at kids, and equipment competitions between employees are good examples. We need to have people in action.
- Get noteworthy figures (mayors, city managers, legislators, business leaders) involved in the event. This will increase the draw. Have them write an op ed one week before the event and the Portland Press Herald and other newspapers will probably publish it. Localize it as a national message won't get any attention.
- The best time to hold large events is on a Friday or preferably Saturday in order to have kids in attendance. The event should be held in the early afternoon (starting no later than 2 p.m. in order to make any TV productions).
- Send a media advisory with the details to the media one week ahead of time.
- Send a full press release two or three days before the event. This should include the key message, supporting materials, quotes from VIPs, and date, time, location that the media will need to spread the word and to cover the event.
- Create a one-page fact sheet to send with every press release.

Erik suggested forming a subcommittee to organize the event. We should determine the message and get it out there with a press release. Perhaps we could tie it in with rodeo week. It was agreed that someone from the chapter should be involved and do an insert in the Portland Press Herald for statewide recognition to benefit all chapters. The following is a list of ideas generated by the committee:

- Do not disregard electronic media. Use Facebook etc. to get the word out. Come up with a plan and start publicizing to the social media a couple of months ahead.
- Don't show off all the equipment. Need to highlight things other than snowplowing such as maintaining cemeteries, parks, grounds. Highlight all the public services that we provide. Show how we improve the lives of the public.
- Use databases with e-mail addresses to reach out to people. Come up with bullet points, statistics, impacts we are making.
- Talk to parents of school children.
- May need to do by county as this event may be too big for one location.

- Be on the agenda of the November chapter board meeting and find out if their budget can provide funding. Bob Malley offered to attend. Ask chapter president to write an op ed letter. These get published in the Portland Press Herald on Thursdays.
- Ask chapter to get a Governor's proclamation for National Public Works Week.
- Have t-shirts made and get sponsors for National Public Works Week.
- Have a regional event in Kittery and one in Portland. Start out at state level and feed down to the county and then to the municipal level.
- Do a short save-the-date message two to three days before sending full press release and follow up with phone calls.
- Contact anyone we know who has expertise in advertising to help.

Trevor is available for hire to help with publicizing the event. He would handle the press releases and follow up for a month. Advertising in the newspaper is very expensive and does not reach a targeted audience. Op eds cost a great deal less and are more effective. Perhaps the Committee or key leaders could meet with the editorial board. Trevor can help with obtaining a press list. Trevor thanked the committee for their attention and left the meeting.

Mike Shaw said the first action step would be to establish a subcommittee to begin working on the event. Myranda will check out the March of Dimes event this weekend at Cabela's to get ideas. The next step is to engage someone at the chapter level to become involved. Erik will ask Trevor for a fee schedule proposal.

4. Round table discussion / possible meeting topics

Mike Shaw said that we want to be sure these meetings have value. If we come up with some relevant topics we may generate interest and better participation. Myranda wondered if the committee should meet less often as people are so busy and can also network through e-mail. One option would be to have bi-monthly field trips or training which might be interesting to members. It was suggested that the chapter have a Facebook page link. It could be made to be non-responsive to avoid negative comments. This may help to get the public works message out. Shawn Bennett said the Town of Pownal has a Facebook page on which he can instantly post messages and project pictures. Bigger cities use social media instead of websites to communicate.

Some possible topics for future meetings are:

- The use of social media by staff.
- Cell phone policies. Some departments pay stipends to staff using personal cell phones for work-related communications.
- Appropriate uses of the radio.
- New direction and changes in the Turnpike Authority.
- Meeting with Utilities which may draw some other directors who are not on the GPCOG list serve. Notify all towns of this meeting in order to alert all Public Works directors.

Eben said we try to keep the GPCOG list serve current but some directors may have fallen out of the loop.

5. Announcements

Eben Marsh reported that the snow plow cutting edge bid is finished and that it went smoothly. Five municipalities and six bidders participated. Eben will seek feedback from those who participated.

6. Other Business / Future Meeting Topics

Lori Roth and others from the Road Stream Crossing Work Group attended last month's meeting and Mike Shaw offered to work with the group on a project that he has in the pipeline in Scarborough. As a result, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP) visited the site and Mike distributed their report which he received this morning.

The site reviewed was Martin Avenue/Broadturn Road stream crossings in Scarborough. The report stated that although Philips Brook feeds into Scarborough Marsh, a salt marsh ecosystem of statewide significance, the stream itself does not appear to contain high value habitat as evidenced in large part by the State-designation as an impaired water body. CBEP recommended that because of this the cost of further exploring installation of a "fish friendly" design for the sites is probably not justified given the lack of expected benefits to fish. Lori Roth will be back next month to discuss the survey.

Mike was surprised at the results of the survey and wants to look at prioritizing. Perhaps we need to go back to stage 1 and start over. The rules seem to be changing with the new administration. Mike said that the Region 1 foreman would like to attend our next meeting. Eric met with the new Commissioner and there are still some funds available to pay for projects.

Eben announced that GPCOG is presenting a symposium today in Brunswick on the use of natural gas and fleet operations. A federal stipend is available for converting trucks. Mike Shaw said Shaw's Trucking would be interested in learning more on this subject. There are no fueling stations in this area yet but they are coming soon. Fifty people registered to attend so this might also be a future meeting topic.

Eben reported that sign bids are going out this week. We received a good price on the salt bid. Mike will contact Mike Thurlow of Fairpoint to invite him to our November meeting. He will also invite representatives of CMP and Time Warner.

Eben noted that working with Glidden Paving was a good experience as they were very helpful.

7. Next Meeting – October 12, 2011

8. Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.